

# Student Participation in University Governance

*A Comparative Study between Tribhuvan University and Kathmandu University, Nepal*

Shiva Lal Acharya



Master of Philosophy in Higher Education  
Department of Education  
Faculty of Educational Sciences

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

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# Abstract

Student participation has been considered important and necessary for effective higher education (HE) governance. Despite legal provision of student participation in HE institutions around the world, student participation is not interpreted and enacted in the same way. Student participation, rather, varies in different respects, for example areas, levels, perspectives and nature of governance. Participation also varies in its types and intensity levels. Empirical research has shown attempts to document and analyze student participation in university governance, focusing mainly on Western HE contexts. While much of this research has contributed to a better understanding of the notion and of how student participation takes place, there is still need for further examination, also in more diverse contexts. Such empirical studies are required to provide an in-depth understanding of student participation and to contribute to mutual efforts of key actors of university and to effective university governance. Universities in developing countries, such as Nepal, are in great need of such studies, especially since mass education movement has posed several difficulties to make education more relevant, equitable and efficient.

The current research study sheds light on student participation in the governance of two universities in Nepal: Tribhuvan University (TU) and Kathmandu University (KU). It employs a qualitative, comparative research design, and identifies types, intensity levels and outcomes of the student participation in the governance of these universities. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews and official documents. The findings are analyzed using a set of indicators developed and based on an integrated set of ideas proposed by Jungblut (2011) and Klemenčič (2011). A comparison is also performed between student participation in the governance of the universities in terms of major similarities and differences.

The findings indicated that student participation in the governance of TU and KU varies in types, intensity levels and outcomes. Political orientation in the student participation at TU and academic motivation at KU refer to the variation in the types. Students' oppositional stance in decision-making makes student participation comparatively more intense at TU than students' supportive role in decision-making at KU. Regarding the outcomes, the student participation has contributed to diminish long-standing conflicts between students and university authorities at TU and fear of external influence (political dominance) at KU. The

findings also indicated that the student participation in both universities is not influential with regard to sharing equal responsibilities and being full members of university decision-making process. The students or their representatives are only consulted; the student comments, feedback or issues are collected, without a guarantee of being taken into consideration in the decision making process. On the other hand, the student participation is motivated by political parties at TU and by institution or university authorities at KU. This political and institutional motivation has potential to weaken even more students' participation in university governance. Building on these findings, this study recommends the universities and the political parties to take into consideration, and encourage student participation by safeguarding the students' rights to independence and equality, and enable involvement in the university's decision-making process.

***Key Words:*** *University Governance, Student Participation, Student Representatives, Decision-making Process, Quality Assurance Process, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu University, Nepal.*

# Dedication

*To My Parents:* Narayan Prasad Acharya & Runnati Acharya

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# List of Tables

Table 1	Differences between TU and KU	26
Table 2	Informants selected and interviewed for each category	28
Table 3	List of analyzed documents	29
Table 4	Summary of major findings in terms of types	40
Table 5	Summary of major findings in terms of intensity levels	43
Table 6	Summary of major findings in terms of outcomes	47
Table 7	Summary of major findings of the study	51
Table 8	Summary of the discussion	62
Figure 1	Student participation at five levels	6
Figure 2	Variables and indicators for analysis	21

# Acronyms

EEU	Eurydice European Unit
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ESU	European Students' Union
HE	Higher Education
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
FSU	Free Student Union
KU	Kathmandu University
MoE	Ministry of Education
PRT	Peer Review Team
QA	Quality Assurance
QAA	Quality Assurance and Accreditation
QAAC	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee
QAAD	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Division
SSR	Self Study Report
SU	Student Union
SWC	Student Welfare Council
TU	Tribhuvan University
UGC	University Grand Commission
UiO	University of Oslo

# Table of Contents

Abstract .....	V
Acknowledgement.....	VIII
List of Tables.....	IX
Acronyms .....	X
1 Introduction of the Study.....	1
1.1 Introduction .....	1
1.2 Problem statement .....	2
1.3 Aim and research questions .....	3
1.4 Outline of the study .....	4
2 Literature Review.....	5
2.1.1 The notion on HE governance.....	5
2.1.2 Student participation in HE governance.....	6
2.1.3 Student participation: Different views .....	9
2.2 Empirical studies on student participation in university governance .....	12
2.3 Conclusion.....	16
3 Analytical Framework.....	17
3.1 Three types of student participation .....	17
3.2 Intensity of Participation .....	19
3.3 Integration - an applied analytical framework.....	20
3.4 Indicators of student participation in university governance.....	22
4 Methods.....	24
4.1 Comparative case design .....	24
4.2 Empirical ground for the study .....	24
4.3 Participants .....	26
4.4 Methods of data collection .....	27
4.5 Data analysis and interpretation .....	29
4.6 Ensuring methodological quality.....	30
4.7 Ethical issues .....	32
5 Data Presentation and Analysis.....	33
5.1 Type of participation in TU and KU .....	33
5.1.1 Nature of governance in TU and KU .....	33

5.1.2	Institutional level of Participation .....	34
5.1.3	Process of participation .....	35
5.1.4	Role in decision-making process.....	37
5.1.5	Student participation in QA process in TU and KU.....	38
5.2	Intensity of participation in TU and KU.....	41
5.2.1	Access to information, consultation and partnership .....	41
5.2.2	Dialogue between students and university authorities .....	42
5.3	Outcomes of student participation in TU and KU .....	44
5.3.1	Benefits.....	44
5.3.2	Challenges .....	45
5.4	Comparison between student participation in TU and KU.....	48
5.4.1	Similarities between student participation in TU and KU .....	48
5.4.2	Differentiation in participation.....	49
6	Discussion .....	52
6.1	What types of participation do students have in the governance of TU and KU? ....	52
6.2	What is the level of student participation in the governance of TU and KU?.....	55
6.3	What are the outcomes of student participation in the governance of TU and KU? .	57
6.4	What are the main differences between student participation in the governance of TU and KU?.....	60
6.5	Methodological reflection.....	63
6.6	Closing remarks .....	63
7	Conclusion and Recommendation.....	65
7.1	Conclusion of the study .....	65
7.2	Practical implications .....	67
7.3	Implications for further study .....	68
	References .....	70
	Appendixes.....	78

# 1 Introduction of the Study

## 1.1 Introduction

For last few decades, students have been interested to participate in the governance of Higher Education (HE). The student interests have mainly been vested in decision-making processes of their Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). In the wake of massification in the 1960s and early 1970s, students started to raise their voice for their position in decision-making, particularly in the industrialized countries of Western Europe and North America (Zuo and Ratsoy, 1999; Luescher, 2008). As a result, the students received a position in the governance or the decision-making process of their HEIs. The Prague Communiqué (2001) has further strengthened student participation and made them (students) full partners (members) at every level of decision-makings in HEIs.

HE governance or decision-making is becoming more complex in all societies (Benjamin et al., 1993). Single effort from the university or HEI alone is not sufficient to face the complexity of HE governance (Klemenčič, 2012a). HEIs around the world are in need of mutual efforts and collaborative actions of negotiation and meditation among the actors (stakeholders) who are directly or indirectly involved in the steering of HE. Common understanding or consensus among the key actors or stakeholders is more important for the effective performance and well steering of the HEIs. Students are among the key stakeholders such as: administrators, faculty members, the members of support staff. Their participation is important for the mutual efforts and the effective university governance (Klemenčič, 2014; EEU, 2008).

In HE, students are very special because of their selfless interests in university outcomes (Jungblut, 2011). They have short academic or university life-cycle that encourages them to bring a more idealistic view in decision-making process or in university governance. Their participation makes them more positive towards college goals and objectives, and provides an inspiration to the students in transformation of university (Obondo, 2000). Students are more likely to understand the motives of the university decisions or university policies. The participation makes it easier for them to accept or object to the formal decisions of the

university. Students, as key stakeholders of HE are also entitled to participatory rights in managerial processes and practices (ESU, 2011; Zuo and Ratsoy, 1999; Boland, 2005).

Student participation in university governance varies in its types and intensity levels. The types include: *student participation in academic self-governance*, *student self-governance structures* and *student participation in Quality Assurance (QA) process* (Jungblut, 2011), whereas the intensity levels cover: *access to information*, *consultation*, *dialogue* and *partnership* (Klemenčič, 2011). The variation in its types and intensity levels is a fact that students are important but not at the same or equal level in all contexts (Jungblut, 2011; Klemenčič, 2011). In other words, students in all HEIs are not equally capable to influence university decisions. In each of the above mentioned types, the level of student influence in decision-making processes is different. If the participation is limited to the minimal level, *access to information*, students have no role in decision-making process. They are just informed about the university decisions. On the other hand, if the participation is approached up to the *partnership* level, their participation indicates that students are equal to other key stakeholders (administrators, faculty members) to influence university decisions and share equal responsibilities throughout the entire decision-making process in universities.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

As argued, regardless of student capacity to influence the university decisions, the student participation in university governance is necessary and important for effective university governance. Despite this clear necessity and importance, the body of empirical evidence on student participation and how that is enacted is still not extensive even in the western literature (Marginson and Rhoades, 2002; Zou and Ratsoy, 1999; Klemenčič, 2014). Some (individual and institutional) attempts have been made in the Western literature to document and analyze their participation in HE governance at different levels: subject or program, faculty, institutional, national and European (Persson, 2003; Klemenčič, 2011; Jungblut, 2011; EEU, 2008; ESU, 20012).

In the developing countries, there are even fewer empirical shows addressing issues of student participation in HE governance; even though most of the HEIs have legal provision of student participation in university governance (Bergan, 2004; Person, 2004). In the context of Nepal, a developing country, there is little to no insight provided by the conceptual literature and

especially empirical studies on student participation in university governance (Khaniya, 2007). However, there is a great need of documentation, studies and analysis of student participation in university governance. Mass education movements in the last three decades have posed several challenges for making education more relevant, equitable and efficient to the Nepalese context. Mutual efforts of all key stakeholders including students of the universities are essential to deal with these challenges (ibid). Students' role is important (as mentioned earlier) to supply relevant information on the expertise and to legitimize the university decisions and their outcome in university governance (Klemenčič, 2014). The empirical studies are essential to reveal the current situation, the problems of the student participation and provide effort for solutions to the problems in students' active and effective participation.

### **1.3 Aim and research questions**

The current study aims to shed light on student participation in the governance of two major universities in Nepal: Tribhuvan University (TU), a public university and Kathmandu University (KU), a non-government university. The central focus of the study is at the institutional level, as the notion of university governance is much more relevant at the overall institutional or university level. As outlined by Bonaccorsi and Daraio (2007), in most universities, main strategic decisions are made and authorized at the institutional level. At the university level, this study identifies the types and intensity levels of student participation in the governance of these two universities. It also aims to observe the outcome of student participation and compare between the student participation in the governance of the two universities: TU and KU.

To achieve these aims, the study is guided by a general research question: ***How do students participate in the governance of Tribhuvan University (TU) and Kathmandu University (KU)?***

The general research question is divided as follows:

1. *What types of student participation can be identified in the governance of TU and KU?*
2. *What is the level of student participation in the governance of TU and KU?*

3. *What are the outcomes of student participation in the governance of TU and KU?*
4. *What are the main differences between student participation in the governance of TU and KU?*

The current study employs a qualitative research design and comparative approach to analyze student participation at the institutional level of TU and KU. It uses semi-structured interviews as a main data source and documents as additional or complementary in both cases. The data is analyzed using an analytical framework, developed based on the integrated ideas proposed by Jungblut (2011) and Klemenčič (2011).

## **1.4 Outline of the study**

The study consists of six chapters. The first chapter begins with a general introduction of student participation in university governance and includes the problem statement and the aims of the study. The second chapter reviews conceptual and empirical literatures analyzing different opinions of scholars and studies carried out in different contexts. The third chapter discusses conceptual insights on the ideas presented by Jungblut (2011) and Klemenčič (2011) and provides a basis for data analysis in the study by integrating the ideas from these two authors. In doing so, it also presents the indicators that are used to identify student participation in the governance of TU and KU. Chapter four outlines the research method and its design, data collection and the analytic procedures. The empirical background of the study i.e. Nepalese HE, ethical issues and issues related to validity and reliability are also presented and discussed in the same chapter.

In chapter five, data collected through semi-structured interviews and documents are presented and analyzed, following the order of the research questions. Chapter six discusses the major findings to answer the research questions with reference to ideas presented in the analytical framework and reviewed in the conceptual and empirical literature. The final chapter presents a conclusion of the study by synthesizing the major issues presented in the discussion, provides some suggestions and recommendations to the university authorities, the students or their representatives and the political parties to make the student participation effective, and also gives some recommendations for further research.



## 2 Literature Review

This chapter consists of two types of literature review: conceptual and empirical. The first part is a conceptual review on student participation in university governance from a general point of view. It examines university governance as a policy-making process that involves various actors, including students in university governance. The second part is a review of the empirical studies that aimed to examine student participation in HE governance in various contexts around the world. The final section summarizes the review, highlights the central idea of this chapter and provides a basis for further study.

### 2.1.1 The notion on HE governance

Governance is a broad notion which generally refers to state governance and its act of controlling over the country, society or institutions (Patton, 2008). To Peters (2001), governance is the efforts of a government to affect (regulate, steer, coordinate, and control) the behavior of citizens and organizations in the society for which it has been given responsibility. However, the meaning of governance is different from state control or state regulation in the context of this study. This study defines governance as an act or a process of making decisions, which is understood clearly by the questions: '*Who makes what decision?*' or '*Who decides? How do they decide? What do they decide?*' (Amaral, et al. 2002, p. 279; Toma, 2007, p. 58). The essence of these questions is that governance is an act or a process of decision-making by involving different stakeholders.

In HE, the meaning of governance often depends on the level of analysis: national, local, institutional, sub-unit or discipline level (Reed et.al, 2002). At institutional level, Marginson and Considine (2000) interpret governance as a system of decision making. The notion of university governance is much more relevant at the overall institutional or university level. As outlined by Bonaccorsi and Daraio (2007), in most universities, main strategic decisions are made and authorized at the institutional level. The HE decision-making process includes various stages: agenda setting, drafting, decision-taking, implementation and monitoring institutional decisions (Klemenčič, 2011). HE governance involves various stakeholders to make decisions on academic and administrative areas. A university or a college is then governed based on the decisions. This interpretation is the basis for the way in which the concept of governance is used in this study.

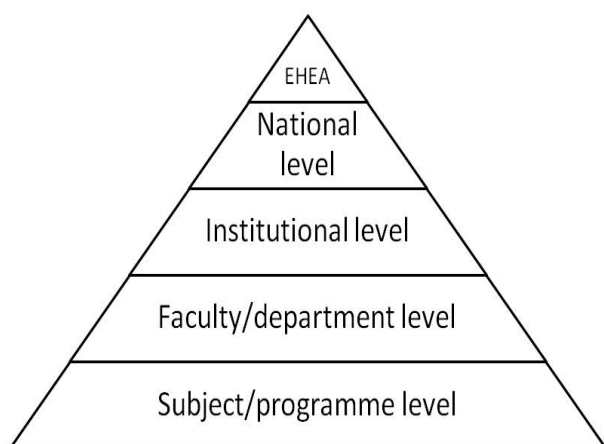
## 2.1.2 Student participation in HE governance

HE governance at institutional level, as discussed above, refers to decision-making system or process which involves various stakeholders. Students are among the stakeholders. Their participation in HE governance refers to their formal or actual involvement or capacity to influence the decisions that are made in their HEIs such as: universities and colleges (Klemenčič, 20011). The formal participation is a legally defined participation, whereas the actual is the practical participation or the participation in practice. Student participation in HE governance is a wide notion which needs a detailed study on its nature and components: *where (areas), how (process), when (time phase of policy making), and what levels* students participate in university governance (Jungblut, 2011).

### ***Level of participation***

HE governance, especially decision making and its authorization, takes place at different levels (Clark, 1983). HE decisions are made at five different levels, starting from subject or program levels to supranational levels (Jungblut, 2011). The levels of HE governance include: *subject/ program level, faculty/ department level, institutional level, national and supranational level*. Asian-Pacific Quality Network (APQN)<sup>1</sup> and European Higher Education Area (EHEA) are examples of HE governance at supranational levels (ibid). Students, as key actors of HE can participate at the five levels of HE governance (see figure 1).

Figure 1 Student participation at five levels



(Adopted from: Jungblut, 2011)

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.apqn.org/about/mission/>

The figure 1 shows that students in the European context are participating at the five levels in HE governance. Their participation starts at the subject or program level is the bottom level and moves up to the supranational, the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), level.

Student participation matters at each level, since HE decisions made at any level ultimately influence the outcomes of university i.e. the quality education that students gain in their university life cycle. However, it can be argued that student participation at institutional level i.e. university level is most important, since university main strategic decisions are made and authorized at the institutional level in most universities (Bonaccorsi and Daraio, 2007). At the institutional level or within the university, student participation matters in relation to areas of participation, time frame of participation in policy process, and the basis or process of participation: whom to involve and how to involve. The areas, timing and process of their participation at institutional level of governance are discussed, as components and nature of their participation, in the following sections.

### ***Areas of participation***

Regarding the area of student participation, there are two distinct aspects: the areas of student choice and the areas granted by the legal framework. The former depend on *student movements and the political scope of student unions* (Klemenčič, 20011). The frequently raised issues through student movements are the areas of their priorities and choices of participation in decision-making. The student movements show student interests basically on: academic (teaching-learning activities, research, etc.) and non-academic (budgetary, administrative, etc.) issues. The political scope of student unions is also an important factor to decide the areas of student participation. If student unions have strong links with the national or local political parties, the student unions definitely have better areas of their choices to participate in decision-making. If they do not have such political connection at any levels, they have limited areas of participation in decision-making at their universities.

On the other hand, the legal framework defines the areas in which to involve students and in which not to (Bergan, 2003). Academic areas of teaching, research and public service are usually defined as the areas of student participation or student areas, because these areas are concerned with the future of the students, whereas finance, staff appointment, administrative tasks, etc. are non-student areas, because these areas are not concerned with students’

academic life. However, there is an argument for student inclusion in all areas of HE, since each area has direct and indirect impact of all university activities on students.

### ***Timing of participation***

As stated earlier, decision-making process includes various stages: *agenda setting, drafting, decision-taking, implementation and monitoring decisions* (Klemenčič, 2011). These stages of decision-making process are linked to timing of participation. The timing of student participation in a decision-making process within HEIs can be divided into three categories: as *early as possible, when a policy is finished but before it is voted upon, and not prior to the voting process* (Jungblut, 2011).

Student participation *as early as possible* in decision-making process refers to the student participation at starting or initial stage i.e. *agenda setting*, of decision-making process. Students take part in multiple rounds of discussions at various levels with a broader range of views. The initial participation enables early and smooth solutions to the HE probable problems. Student participation *before the voting process but after policy formulation* is linked to the second stage of decision-making i.e. *drafting*. Student participation at this stage has many chances of rejecting university leadership, since it is a faster way of decision-making process, and the university authorities just look for students' feedbacks. Student participation *not prior to the voting process* refers to the student participation at third stage i.e. *decision-taking*. Student participation at the decision-taking stage has a higher chance to be rejected on controversial issues; nevertheless, students may have new ideas on controversial issues. This is the fastest way of decision making, and the outcomes of the decision-making process will be exactly the same as it is planned by the university authorities. Student participation, regarding the last two stages of decision-making process i.e. *implementation and monitoring decisions* does not concern with timing of participation rather concerns with the full representation (*partnership*) in university decision-makings (Klemenčič, 2011).

Jungblut (2011) points out that student participation at each level matters with policy formulation and its implementation. However, not all students over the world do have this kind of access or environment to participate in all these levels. In the context of Nepal, students have been participating in a limited number of levels (Khaniya, 2007).

### ***Base of representation***

There are different traditions or bases to select student representatives in university governance. They are basically three: *academic profile, subsidiarity principle or elected through a general process* (Jungblut, 2011). In the first student representation tradition, academic level (PhD student or early researcher) and performance (brilliant student or normal student) are the main principles of student representative selection for university governance. In the second, subsidiarity principle, a specific area of knowledge (the direct first-person knowledge) to promote the specific subject in HE (ESIB, 2006) is the main principle for student representation in university governance. In the third tradition, a general procedure with certain principles, mainly electoral procedure is the main base of student representation in university governance. This tradition is the most common and standard way of student representation. Students are elected from student structures (student unions) in this representation type. The student structures are built on criteria such as: *openness, representativeness, democracy and independence* (Proteasa, 2008).

Openness is meant by student representation without any limitations such as: academic performance, age, gender, race, religion or sexual orientation (ESU, 2011a). Student representation, rather, is supposed to reflect representativeness of diversity (democracy) in student body in university. Student representatives or their structures are supposed to act independently in decision making processes. In the organizational and higher level, student representation can act independently; the representation becomes stronger, since student representatives who are graded by their professors on subject or faculty level cannot act independently and put voice in opposition (Jungblut, 2011; ESU, 2009). The institutionalized kind of representation legitimizes student representatives to speak for the student body and make trustworthy in the eyes of non-student actors.

### **2.1.3 Student participation: Different views**

At institutional level, many of the HE systems around the world have legal provisions to involve students in university governance or in decision-making processes (Bergan, 2004; Person, 2004). However, their participations may vary in terms of formal and actual practice, and nature and mode of governance at the institutional level. Formal representation is ensured and recognized by primary and secondary legislations on HE (Person, 2004). The primary

legislation includes: the HE law, the university act, the law on student unions, etc., whereas the secondary legislation covers the statutes of the HEIs. There, however, might be a gap between formal provision and actual practice (Klemenčič, 2011). In other words, students have an influential position according to the legal framework. However, they might be less influential in real practice. The gap between formal provision and actual practice in student participation is a reason of having different perceptions or views such as: equal partners, the future elite, the consumers, and the junior fellows (Luescher, 2010a; Bergan, 2003; Boland, 2005; Klemenčič, 20011). These perceptions are linked with specific views of institutions or modes of institutional governance: democratic, market oriented, communitarian and state-centered.

In the *democratic governance*, all actors of HE including students are *equal partners* and expected to play equally important roles in the governance or decision making in HE (Olsen, 2007). In this type of governance, it is assumed that no single actor has all knowledge and experience or skills to solve complex and dynamic problems pertaining in HEIs. Different views and skills from all HE stakeholders are essential to solve the complex and dynamic problems. In other words, the state or HEI, as a unitary actor with monopoly over power and control is not viable to solve the complex and dynamic problems pertaining in HEIs. Effective solution of the complexity requires sharing power and responsibilities among various stakeholders (EEU, 2008). In the democratic governance, policy or decision making is an act of corporate network of public boards, councils and commissions (Gornitzka, 1999). The unions of employees and students are also assigned equal significance in university governance (Luescher, 2010). There are counter arguments against the equal or full membership (partnership) of non-faculty members such as student members. Student participation as non-faculty members is supposed to weaken the decision-making efficiency of university (Klemenčič, 20011). They, rather, are expected to hold oppositional stance in decision-making processes (Kooiman, 1983). On the other hand, their participation is assumed just a formality, since students do not hold real influence and are required expertise in decision makings (Luescher, 2010a).

In the *market oriented governance*, universities are defined as service providers, and students are supposed to be clients or consumers of educational services. Students as the clients or consumers of HE are affected by decisions made on HEIs, and, therefore, they have a right to participate in the decision making process as a means to safeguard their interests (Boland,

2005). Students and academics have a common interest in quality education in university. In teaching and learning activities the students and the academics are equal members or partners. On the other hand, students in university governance are just audiences and advisors (feedback providers). Students, therefore, are just expected to get feedback by university authorities for effective and efficient governance or management. Their political activism is very limited, and they are typically politically apathetic. They are motivated to qualify themselves for their professional career rather than internal working (Clark, 1998; Bergan, 2004; Cloete & Fehnel, 2002).

In the *communitarian governance*, all members of the academic community, including students, are equally responsible and share a common commitment for academic development in the university. Students are participants rather than customers of HE (Bergan, 2004; Persson, 2004). The students are full members, and are expected to influence the organization and content of education at university (Communiqué, 2001). There are two counter arguments against the full membership in communitarian governance, in which students are '*transient members*', or '*junior members*' because of their short-term interests, limited institutional development and limited knowledge or experience in relation to other members such as: administrative staff and faculty members (Klemenčič, 2011, pp. 15-16). These ideas match with the type of governance known as; the community of scholars, since decision-making power in the community of scholars rests on the senior academics based on their ranks and term (Olsen, 2007).

In the *state-centered governance*, the sovereign state exercises power over individual institutions (Olsen, 2007; Bovens et al., 2001) such as: university or college. The role of HE organizations in this governance is to implement political objectives (Olsen, 2007). Purpose of participating students in university governance is to politically socialize students with democratic norms and make them responsible citizens or future elites who can serve the society after their graduation (Hoskins et al., 2008). As a counter argument, it is argued that governmental actors see themselves as omniscient and omnipotent actors and try to steer university using stringent and extensive control mechanism (Goedegebuure et al., 1994). Change in HE follows changes in the political leadership either via elections or via changes in political coalitions (Gornitzka and Massen, 2000). In such a situation, the internal stakeholders (senior academics, *students*, university authorities) do not have any decisive role

in making higher level of policies and programs for steering their institutions. Only the technical decisions are left to them at lower levels (Olsen, 2007).

## **2.2 Empirical studies on student participation in university governance**

This sub-section is a review of the empirical studies on student participation in HE governance in different contexts. Four empirical cases are reviewed: University of Alberta, Kenyatta University, University of Cape Town and one of Australian metropolitan universities. The review of these empirical studies, conducted in different context of the world, is expected to provide empirical information, as a background for this study. The review is also expected to set the baseline for interpreting the findings of this study. In connection to the conceptual review, the empirical review analyzes the nature of student participation in the universities. In addition, it also examines the outcome and factors of motivation of student participation in the university governance.

### ***Nature of student participation***

All of the above mentioned empirical studies agree upon the fact that student participation in decision-making refers to student participation in university governance. The review indicates that there is student participation in various bodies within the universities. Students usually participate in the university boards such as: the University Senate, and the university department committees such as: sports, entertainment, disciplinary committees of the universities. However, the nature, outcome and the factors of their motivation are various depending the context and nature of the studies.

The studies show that student participation *is* influential in the department committees of Kenyatta University (Obiero, 2012), one of Australian metropolitan universities (Lizzio and Wilson, 2009) and a democratically governed Cape Town University before its transmission (Luescher, 2008). In department committees of the universities, students are supposed to be equal partners and expected to play an important role in the university governance or decision-making process, as discussed in the democratic governance (Olsen, 2007; Bergan, 2004). The department committees are more concerned with the issues that affect student activities. In the department committees of the universities, student voices are mainly



concerned with student academic activities such as: class attendance by the lecturers, examination, internet connection, the use of the library. The review also outlines that a democratically governed university considers students as stakeholders at full members in university. Students have a say on the issues that affect themselves and their academic profile. Their voices, therefore, are addressed or considered seriously. The student representatives in both cases are capable to communicate the voices of the student mass in the department committees of Kenyatta University and the democratically governed Cape Town University. However, the student participation in higher level i.e. (university boards), at the University Senate in Kenyatta University (Obiero, 2012) and the Cape Town University after its transmission to the managerialism (Luescher (2008) *is* not influential because of several reasons. The first reason is that their participation in such cases is just a formality, as discussed a counter argument in the democratic governance against the equal partnership (Luescher, 2010a). The second, most of the issues, the student representatives raised there, are scrutinized or examined by the university authorities, as students were assumed to lack qualification to have a final say on university decisions.

Third, the student representatives in some of the issues are not involved and even not consulted for their feedback in decision-making. For example, a matter dealing with exam irregularities was handled without consulting the student leaders in Kenyatta University. Fourth, student participation in the issues such as quality control was felt inefficient and ineffective by the university authorities of Kenyatta University (Obiero, 2012) and the managerialized Cape Town University (Luescher, 2008), since the student representatives are not professional evaluators or curriculum developers. Finally, the ratio of student participation in both of the cases is very low. It would be very difficult for the student representatives to make decisions in their favor, since there is no equal membership in the decision-making process. The studies are finally concluded with a strong recommendation for full membership to the students, because the students are affected by decisions made in the universities and, therefore, have a right to participate in the decision making process, as a means to safeguard their own interests (Boland, 2005; Klemenčič, 20011).

### ***Student participation in quality assurance (QA) process***

The review indicates that the student participation in university governance is basically concerned with the quality of the knowledge transmitted to them (Obiero, 2012; Lizzio and Wilson, 2009). Some of the newly introduced academic programs in Kenyatta University have attracted many self-sponsored students. At the same time, in the governance of the university, student representatives have participated, as overseers in QA process. For example, the students have become members of The KUSA Assessment Management Committee (KUSAAMC) that oversees the way in which the university administrators manage the university especially in the disbursement of resources (Obiero, 2012). Students have been also overseeing the quality of education.

### ***Outcomes of the participation***

As outcomes of the student participation in university governance or decision making, the empirical studies show that student mass, their representatives and universities have been benefited. Student participation has become really beneficial for establishing democratic culture of shared authority and interdependent responsibility between and among the stakeholders in the governance of University of Alberta (Zuo, 1995). The findings also indicate that the shared authority and interdependent responsibility are important for the effective governance and transparent management of the university. Student participation is also important to develop future careers of the student representatives.

The findings show that student participation in decision-making of Kenyatta University (Obiero, 2012), Cape Town University (Luescher, 2008) and one of Australian metropolitan universities (Lizzio and Wilson, 2009) has made a link between the students and the university administrators and led to peaceful co-existence in the university. However, students' absence in decision making and lack of consultation with them could lead to frequent student revolts. In Kenyatta University, the student participation has restored calmness, when a good consultation on both ends has been established. The decisions made on mutual consultation have made their executions easier and effective.

The major role of the student participants (representatives) is to represent the student mass and communicate voices of the mass in decision-making process (Zuo, 1995; Obiero, 2012; Luescher, 2008). The review shows that the student leaders are capable of doing so, to a

greater extent. In doing so, the student leaders have gained knowledge and skills in relation to decision making and academic processes in the university (ibid). The knowledge or skills they gained through their participation, would be expected to enable them to fit into a bigger society, outside the university. The studies, therefore, suggest the university to allow the student participation by giving them adequate opportunities and roles in the university governance.

The results also indicated that student participation has been beneficial to protect and promote student rights and their facilities in all the mentioned universities (Zuo, 1995; Obiero, 2012; Luescher, 2008; Lizzio and Wilson, 2009). The success of student representatives to communicate student voices on academic issues related to the students' immediate concerns and their facilities has made the university administrators to facilitate students with good internet services, well equipped library and qualified lectures. The student participation has contributed to protect and promote student rights, when it comes to the participation in all areas of university governance.

### ***Factor of motivation of students***

Review on the empirical studies demonstrates two factors that motivate student representatives to take part in university governance (Zuo, 1995; Obiero, 2012; Lizzio and Wilson, 2009). Some of the student representatives at the above mentioned universities were curious towards students' roles and rights in university governance. They wanted to know how their universities are governed and also were curious to gain different skills for leadership. Their curiosity inspired them to participate in the decision-making process of their university. The curiosity is a factor of self-motivation. On the other hand, the rest of the student representatives were reported to be motivated by the external factor. They were asked and motivated by their university authorities or their supervisors to take part in decision-making processes.

Reviewing these cases at a single glance, the students who participated in university governance have had an opportunity to contribute to matters affecting the life of students in their university, but have not had equal status in all matters and in all levels. Despite of some attempts to ensure students' rights, the university academics and administrative staff are dominant in the governance of these universities. Student participation, therefore, has been identified different in these universities. For example, the student participation is influential at

the department level of Kenyatta University, one of the Australian metropolitan universities, the democratically governed Cape Town University, but the participation is not influential in university boards of these universities and the Managerlized Cape Town University.

## **2.3 Conclusion**

From both reviews, conceptual and empirical, it emerges that student participation is a wide notion covering various aspects such as: areas, process, context, levels, nature or mode of HEIs. The review also confirms that students are not considered equally important in all contexts of university governance, though their participation is recognized and ensured by the primary or the secondary legislations on HE in almost all countries around the world (Bergan 2004; Person, 2004). Students are perceived differently as junior fellows in the meritocratic community of scholars (Luescher-Mamashela, 2010), equal partners in the democratic view (Klemenčič, 2011) and consumers in a market oriented-view (Bergan, 2003; Boland, 2005). Considering this (a wide concept and not equal or homogenous participation), this review provides a basis for further study on student participation in different contexts and from different angles.

## 3 Analytical Framework

This chapter consists of four sections. The first two sections integrate conceptual insights from studies by Jungblut (2011) and Klemenčič (2011) on student participation in university governance and decision-making processes. These conceptual insights contribute to understanding three different types and four different intensity levels of student participation. The third section presents a framework integrated to operationalize the conceptual ideas referring to types and intensity levels of student participation. The final section presents the indicators that are going to be used for the analysis of the data and to identify student participation in the governance of TU and KU.

### 3.1 Three types of student participation

Jungblut's (2011) notion of three pillars of student participation in university governance refers to three ways of their participation: *student participation in academic self-governance*, *student self-governance structures* and *student participation in Quality Assurance (QA) process*. These three pillars are discussed in the following sections.

#### *Student participation in academic self-governance*

The first pillar of student participation in university governance concerns student participation in academic self-governance. This type of participation takes place in the HEI which is governed by itself or by its internal stakeholders such as: academicians, students and administrators (Jungblut, 2011). The internal stakeholders have a shared commitment to academic development in the university by learning, scholarship, research, search for the truth and being irrespective of immediate utility, political convenience or economic benefit, etc. (Olsen, 2007; Habermas 1987). In this type of participation, students (their representatives) participate in different bodies of the university at different levels (Jungblut, 2011). Their participation can take place from lower i.e. the subject or program level to the higher i.e. the senate level within university.

The institutional perspective of university governance interprets a university or a college as an independent (self-governed) institution of HE which is supposed to be free from external agents such as: politics, market, national and international organizations (Olsen, 2007). The vision

of the university governance, as a community of scholars assumes university is an independent organization of HE (ibid). Student participation in these visions covers the classical role of students as stakeholders giving feedbacks in policy making processes (Jungblut, 2011).

### ***Student self-governance structures***

The second type of participation, student self-governance structures, takes place in the form of student unions that are motivated more by political actions at local or national levels (Jungblut, 2011). This perspective considers students as equal partners in HE governance (Päll/Ufert 2011). It is a democratic vision of university governance where all the actors of HE are supposed to be equal (Olsen, 2007).

In universities or colleges, there are student structures or student unions lobbying to dichotomous political ideologies: activists versus professional (Klemenčič, 2007). The student unions lobbying to '*activist orientation tend to be oppositional in nature and 'on the left in terms of political ideology'*' (Altbach, 2006, p.335). Their ideologies are based on solidarity, student rights, social justice, etc. They are likely to '*use revolutionary language and confrontational activism*' when they stand against (Klemenčič, 2011, p. 5).

In contrast, the student unions lobbying to the political orientation of 'professional' are more likely to be highly developed institutional structures backed up by legal procedures (formalities) and funding (Klemenčič, 2011). Dialogue and partnership are the participatory modes in university governance or decision making. There are two different kinds of professional orientation: political and non-political. Political orientation pursues political activities and seeks full partnership in decision-making, whereas non-political orientation is service oriented seeking privatized benefits to students: facilities and services to students. The non-political orientation uses a consultative participatory mode.

### ***Student participation in Quality Assurance (Q A) process***

The third pillar of participation, student participation in Quality Assurance (Q A) process, is a new type of student participation in HE governance. This kind of participation is supposed to be a beginning point for stronger and influential student participation in upper levels (university boards), '*especially in those countries, where student inclusion in HE governance*

*is traditionally weak*' (Jungblut, 2011, p. 70). It is easier for students to get involved even in situations, where they are not perceived as being members of the academic community but rather as clients or consumers with a limited interest in the HEI (Klemenčič, 2011). The actual aim of the QA process is to enhance the quality in HE. Students are more concerned with the quality for their academic or personal development (Jungblut, 2011). There are, generally, two ways of participating students in QA processes: as stakeholders giving feedback; and as members of an auditing panel. These participations are described as the passive and the active in a QA process from a developmental perspective (Jungblut, 2011).

*The passive participation* basically does not require much additional training. Most of the students will be able to bring their issues on the table based on their day-to-day knowledge of the respective study program. Student unions ensure student representatives for the passive role in a QA process and they are expected to act independently without fear of repression from professors, the department or the HEI (ESU 2011b).

For *the active participation*, student unions create a student QA expert pool that is trained regularly and assigned to the different QA processes. The pool is expected to act in a way that ensures neutrality and impartiality (Jungblut, 2011). Financial empowerment, cultural acceptance of students as equal partners and protection of students' rights, etc., are essential for independency and representativeness in student representatives to raise their voice against problems occurring during QA processes (Luescher, 2010a).

## 3.2 Intensity of Participation

Klemenčič (2011) has proposed four intensity levels of student participation within HEIs. The intensity levels measure the degree of their participation, starting from minimal access for information to the equal partnership level. In other way, students' capacity to influence university decisions can be measured through the intensity levels. At the first two levels, student participation has little to no influence in university governance, whereas at the last two level students have some influence and even equal membership in decision-making processes. The intensity levels include: *access to information, consultation, dialogue and partnership*. These are discussed in the following sections.

***Access to information:*** This is the initial level or the base for all other levels of participation. It is a one-way provision of information from the university administration to student bodies

(Klemenčič, 2011). University or college just provides information to student representatives, but they do not interact directly with the students. Student representatives are acknowledged to the decisions that have already been taken.

**Consultation:** At this level, the university administration provides information and then asks students for their comments, views and feedback on specific issue but without guarantee of consideration (Jungblut, 2011). The interaction is mainly used to exchange information and to transport the students' point of view to the non-student actors.

**Dialogue:** There is formal or informal kind of dialogue or interaction between student representatives (body) and the university authorities for mutual benefits on shared objectives (Klemenčič, 2011). Though student representatives do not have formal decision making power, i.e. voting or veto rights, some of the decisions can be indirectly influenced by their participation. They also have opportunities to launch their own agendas, but there is no guarantee to affect the final outcome of decision-making (Jungblut, 2011). It just enables students to have a limited influence in the decision making process.

**Partnership:** It is the highest intensity level of student participation. Students involve in all steps of decision-making processes: agenda setting, drafting, decision-taking, implementation and monitoring of institutional decisions (Klemenčič, 2011). They share equal responsibilities in all these steps of decision-making processes. In doing so, they have voting rights and also are delegated some particular implementation activities (Jungblut, 2011).

### **3.3 Integration - an applied analytical framework**

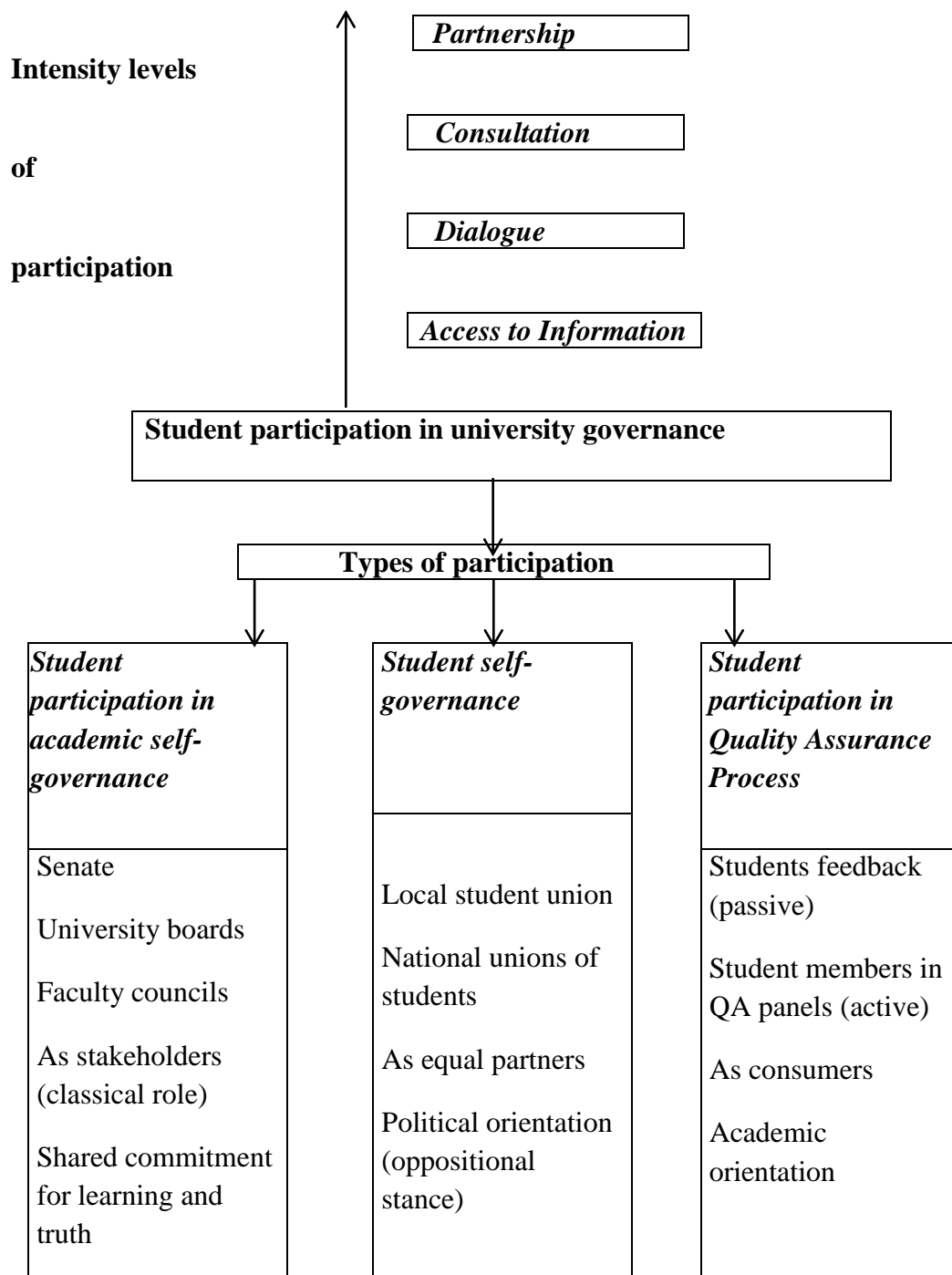
The analytical framework is developed based on the ideas discussed in the previous section of this chapter, on two different measures of student participation in university governance: types of participation (Jungblut, 2011) and intensity levels of participation (Klemenčič, 2011).

As discussed above, student participation can be observed in terms of types: student participation in academic self-governance, student self-governance structures, and student participation in Quality Assurance (QA) process (Jungblut, 2011). Also the degree of student participation is of relevance. This can be measured in terms of different intensity levels ranging from access to information level to the partnership level (Klemenčič, 2011). The integration between the types and the intensity levels contributes to develop an in-depth



understanding of student participation in university governance, since in each type of student participation, the intensity levels of their participation vary (see Figure 2). The current study presents the following figure as the basis for analyzing the data collected.

**Figure: 2**      **Variables and indicators for analysis**



(Based on Jungblut, 2011; Klemenčič, 2011)

The figure 2 shows the integrated analytical framework that contains indicators of the types and the intensity levels of student participation in university governance. The figure also shows that participation can be observed at four intensity levels in each type of participation.

### **3.4 Indicators of student participation in university governance**

The analytical framework developed based on ideas of Jungblut (2011) and Klemenčič (2011), represents the basis for identifying the indicators necessary to analyze the empirical data (i.e., the operationalization). This set of indicators is presented below together with an explanation of how they were employed in the analysis. The analysis was carried out on student participation in university governance at institutional level. Universities' main strategic decisions are made and authorized at the institutional level in most of the universities (Bonaccorsi and Daraio, 2007).

As stated, there are three types of student participation: student participation in academic self-governance, student self-governance structures and student participation in Quality Assurance (QA) process. The first research question (*What types of participation do the students have in the governance of TU and KU?*) is addressed by empirically examining these types. Each of these types has typical features, as the indicators that contribute to identify the types of their participation. For example, the classical role of students as stakeholders, participation in university bodies (faculty, council, senate, etc.) and shared commitment for learning are the indicators that contribute to identify the first type. Political orientation in student unions, participation at local (university level) and participation as equal partnership (even oppositional stance) adhere to the second type. The collection of student feedback in QA process (passive participation) and their representations as members in the QA panels (*active participation*) belong to the third type. The identification of these types of student participation is supported by documents and by interviews conducted with students and non-student stakeholders.

In the types of student participation, participation can be observed at four intensity levels which are: access to information, consultation, dialogue and partnership. The second research question (*What is the level of student participation in the governance of TU and KU?*) is addressed by empirically observing these intensity levels of their participation. Each of these

levels can be examined through their typical characteristics which serve as the indicators. At the minimal level i.e. access to information, students are just provided university decisions (information), but they have no role in university decision-making process. At the consultation level, student feedbacks or views are collected by the university authorities without guarantee of their consideration. At the dialogue level, the students have limited influence to launch their agendas but no guarantee to affect the final outcome of decision-making process, whereas at the final partnership level, students have shared responsibilities in each step of institutional decision-making process. The interviews and documents with student and non-student stakeholders support the analysis on/of these intensity levels of student participation.

The analysis of the types and the intensity levels of the student participation support also answering the third research question (*What are the outcomes of student participation in the governance of TU and KU?*). The question is addressed by examining the benefits and challenges based on the themes of the analytical framework and the literature review. Access to (rights of) information, opportunity to share their ideas, comments in decision making and QA processes, and the partnership in decision making can be derived from the types and the intensity levels and interpreted as the benefits of student participation. Personal development of the student members (representatives) and reduction of the long-standing conflicts between the student representatives and the university authorities are observed as benefits based on the literature review. On the other hand, the challenges of student participation are observed on the factors that obstruct their participation to be influential or effective at partnership level in decision-making and QA processes. For example, the political orientation and the academic motivation can be perceived as obstacles to the effective and influential student participation.

The final research question (*What are the main differences between student participation in the governance of TU and KU?*) is answered through an empirical examination with reference to the type, intensity and outcomes. The features as the indicators of each type, intensity level and the outcome of the student participation are kept in mind while depicting the most poignant differences between student participation in these universities.

## 4 Methods

This study employs qualitative methods to observe phenomena such as student participation in the governance or decision-making at TU and KU in their natural setting (Anderson, 1998; Creswell, 1998). Student participation in HE governance could be expressed best in words rather than in any form of quantification (Robson, 2002; Creswell, 2014). The qualitative research *'avoids the artificial responses typical of controlled'* quantitative studies (Fetterman, 1998, p. 31). Student representatives, academicians, administrators and other members of university senate or council express themselves in a natural manner in interviews. Participants in this study are not limited by the length, rather directed by the interview protocols.

### 4.1 Comparative case design

Considering its nature and the purpose, this study applies comparative research design, which compares two different cases with similar background i.e. student participation in university governance of TU and KU. According to Bryman (2012), comparative research design entails studying two contrasting cases using more or less identical methods.

The advantages of the comparative studies are: gaining in-depth knowledge about the cases and advancing the knowledge that would be lost, if only one case is studied (Anderson, 1997). Bryman (2012) argues that social phenomena can be known better *'when they are compared in relation to two or more meaningfully contrasting cases or situations'* (p.72). It also gives the possibility to perform a work of exploratory nature (Gerring 2007). With an expectation of detailed and in-depth understanding of student participation in the governance of both universities, the comparative case study is a selection of this work. The comparative study contributes to identify the types, intensity levels, outcomes of student participation and the variation in terms of their similarities and differences.

### 4.2 Empirical ground for the study

The development phase of Nepalese HE system is very short. Modern formal schooling models were used in the country after the abolishment of Rana dynasty in 1951 (Khaniya, 2007). TU was established in 1959 as the first university in Nepal. Most of the universities

were established during 80s and 90s (UGC, 2012). KU was the first university established by private sector. It was established in 1991 with the motto of '*Quality Education for Leadership*'.

Legally, there are two types of colleges and universities in Nepal: community and institutional (Khaniya, 2007). Community colleges or universities receive regular government grants through University Grant Commission (UGC) whereas institutional colleges and universities are funded by their own or other non-governmental sources. The institutional colleges and universities are organized either as a non-profit trust or as a company. However, in practical terms, the universities and colleges are two types: public (community) and private (institutional) (ibid). Except KU, all universities and academies are publicly managed and are supported by public funds.

### ***TU and KU***

TU and KU are two major universities out of six functioning universities in Nepal. These two universities are large universities and represent the HE system of Nepal. TU and KU cover up a large portion of student enrolment in higher education, and the universities are the most outstanding institutions in the country, receiving most of the donors' attention and funding (Khaniya, 2007). Both universities are autonomous organizations, in which the prime-minister of Nepal is the ceremonial head of the university and vice-chancellors are the executive heads of the university (ibid). The vice-chancellors are appointed by the government. The universities are supervised by UGC, the umbrella organization of all higher institutions of Nepal. It provides different kinds of support to the institutions and controls their quality (MoE, 2014).

The two universities are of different types. TU is a public university, regarded as an autonomous institution, which is funded by the government of Nepal. The UGC report (2012/2013) points out that TU is run by government grants, and 90% of its operating costs are covered by government grants. As mentioned above, KU is the only one university established and managed by the non-government sectors. It is an independent and non-profit oriented university<sup>2</sup>. It receives a small amount of financial support from UGC. TU has now grown into a complex school of HEIs and offers a wide range of undergraduate and

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ku.edu.np/university/>

postgraduate programs in many professional and technical areas, the social sciences, and business management (Lohani, 2001 as cited in Chauhan, 2008). KU is being developed as an institution of higher learning dedicated to maintain high standards of academic excellence. It was established by an Act (1991) passed by the parliament of Nepal.

The differences between TU and KU are presented in Table 1.

Table.1: Differences between TU and KU

SN.	<i>Tribhuvan University (TU)</i>	<i>Kathamandu University (KU)</i>
1	public university (1959)	non-government university (1991)
2	funded and run by the government	autonomous university
3	covers wide range of subjects and areas	focus on technical subjects

The Table 1 highlights the major differences between TU and KU in terms of institutional identity, natures of institution, and finance, subject range.

The study narrows down its investigation and sheds light on how the students participate in governance or decision making process at TU and KU. It does not go through the detailed process or system of university governance, rather focuses on student participation, especially in the supreme decision making bodies: the University Council of TU and the Senate of KU, at institutional level.

### 4.3 Participants

Qualitative research typically emphasizes on ‘*relatively small samples [...] even single case selected purposefully to permit inquiry into and understanding of a phenomenon in depth*’ (Patton, 2002, p. 46). As a purposive sampling, this study includes 5 groups from student and non-student stakeholders of each university. Student stakeholders have no more further categorization. However, non-student stakeholders are further categorized in four groups: a) vice-chancellors b) deans (the school of arts and the school of management or education), c) expertise from different fields and d) teachers. There is one or two from each group and from each university for interviews. The total number of interviewees is 12.

## 4.4 Methods of data collection

In qualitative research, data can be collected through different ways or sources such as: interviews, observations, documents, and so on (Merriam, 2009). This study employed two methods of data types: interview and documents. The interview was the main source of information, as qualitative nature of the study, whereas the documents were used to support the ideas and complement the information provided by the interviews. The relevance of using these methods will be discussed in the following sections.

### *Documents*

As mentioned, in this study, the documents were not the major source of data. However, they provided basic information and guidelines, which contributed to investigate student participation in the governance of TU and KU further through interviews. The documents also complemented the information provided by the interviews. The Universities (TU and KU) provided an easy access to a wide variety of documents (university acts, UGC/ MoE reports, etc.). The universities also provided official link of different agencies (UGC, MoE, etc.) that made it possible to collect their annual reports. Most of the documents were gathered from their (Universities, UGC, MoE, etc.) official websites to ensure high authenticity or representativeness in the collected information, as stated by Bryman (2012).

The collected information through the documents was related to the Nepalese HE system and its governance at institutional level, especially at KU and TU. The documents, except university acts, were very general and provided information on various issues and fields including the governance, funding, seminar, functions, new program, etc. of TU and KU. The university acts of TU and KU, and QAA guideline were the collection of primary legislations that outlined how the universities are governed (Bergan, 2004).

The following table describes what sorts of documents were analyzed while gathering the data.

Table 2: List of analyzed documents

S. N.	Documents	Translation	Publisher
1	Shaikshik Suchana, 2071	Information on Education, 2014	MoE
2	Tribhuvan Bishwabiddhalaya Aian, 2049	Tribhuvan University Act, 1993	Nepal Law Commission
3	Kathmandu Bishwabiddhalaya Aian, 2048	Kathmandu University Act, 1991	Nepal Law Commission
4	Quality assurance and accreditation for higher education in Nepal: A brief guideline		University Grand Commission
5	Uchcha Shiksha Polici Prastawana, 2070	Purposed Higher Education Policy, 2013/14	University Grand Commission

The table shows the list of documents studied and analyzed in the process of collecting data for the current study.

### ***Interview***

The documents, mainly provided information on the structure and process of the university governance but very less on student participation. For this reason, interview was an important part of this study, as the interviews shed light on how universities are governed and how students participate in university governance. By interviewing university stakeholders, it was, therefore, possible to examine types, intensity levels, and outcomes of student participation in university governance. As stated in the previous sub-section, the information collected from the documents guided the interviews, with a focus on the parts that needed further investigation or explanation. In this regards, the study employed semi-structured interview with a range of different stakeholders of the university governance to interview them and explore student participation in a comprehensive way. In doing so, the interview guidelines were prepared for two groups: for student and non-student stakeholders (see in Appendix 1).



The selection of the participants was carried out based on the nature of the study (institutional level), purpose of the study (student participation in university governance) and availability of the respondents (Patton, 2007). Twelve interviews were conducted from 5 groups at each university: TU and KU. The interviews, however, were guided by two interview guidelines for the student and non-student stakeholders. Out of 12 respondents, there were 4 student representatives or members, and the number of non-student stakeholders includes 8. The following table describes the informants by showing the categories they belong to and their numbers.

Table 3: Informants selected and interviewed for each category

S/No	Stakeholders	Institute		Types	Number	Code
1	Vice- chancellor	TU	KU	Non-student	1+1= 2	VC, TU/ VC, KU
2	Dean of Humanity and Social Science	TU	KU	Non-student	1+1=2	D, TU1/ D, KU1
	Dean of Education	TU		Non-student	1	D, TU2
3	Member: Educationist		KU	Non-student	1	E, KU
	Member: Founder		KU	Non-student	1	F, KU
4	Teacher	TU		Non- Student	1	T, TU
5	Student leaders	TU	KU	Student	2+2=3	S, TU1,2/ S, KU1,2
Total		6	6	8 (non- student) + 4 (student)	12	

## 4.5 Data analysis and interpretation

As stated in the previous chapter (3.4), the empirical data regarding the student participation in the governance of TU and KU was presented and analyzed with reference to a set of ideas (indicators of type, intensity levels and outcomes), discussed in the analytical framework and literature review. When empirical data was collected through interviews and documents, the data was processed and prepared for its presentation and analysis, since the data was in a large

amount and not all categories were equally important. The amount of data was reduced to make it interpretable (Bryman, 2012) through data preparation and analysis process, which consists of three stages: *open coding and axial coding and selective coding*, as mentioned by Strauss (1987, as cited in Neuman, 2000).

In the first stage (*open-coding*), the raw data, collected through interviews and document analysis was organized into different categories based on university i.e. TU and KU, and also based on stakeholders i.e. student and non-student. Abstract concepts and specific details from the concrete data were marked (coded) and distinguished. In the second stage (*axial coding*), the researcher focused on the actual data organizing ideas or themes based on the initial coded themes i.e. obtained at the first stage. And at the final stage (*selective coding*) the researcher made comparisons and contrasts from the data organizing and reorganizing the specific themes. Finally, the researcher presented and elaborated the results in details with reference to a set of ideas or indicators (indicators) as stated in the section 3.4.

In short, the empirical data process involved activities such as: a) developing instruments, collecting data (through semi- structured interviews and document analysis), b) preparing data (by translating, transcribing, sorting, categorizing, coding), c) analyzing, examining, comparing and contemplating the coded data, d) reviewing the new and recorded data, and e) interpreting and synthesizing the results by applying a set of ideas or indicators.

## **4.6 Ensuring methodological quality**

It is important that the analysis and findings of the study are credible and compelling to ensure the research quality. Validity and reliability are the quality criteria for any research (Bryman, 2012). The validity and reliability are essential for the judgment of the findings in terms of trustworthiness and authenticity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Creswell, 2014). The trustworthiness and authenticity of the findings were ensured by establishing validity and reliability in the study.

### ***Validity***

In qualitative research, validity refers to appropriateness of data collection and analysis strategies in order to come up with valid conclusion (the construct validity). Internal validity can be maintained by adopting triangulation approach i.e. the use of multiple methods or

sources of data collection (Bryman 2012; Lambert, 2102). The researcher, for this purpose, ensured the internal validity by collecting data from documents and the interviews. The selection of the participants and documents was another attempt to secure validity (Cresswell and Miller, 2000). The interviewees and documents were from different categories and groups (see the section 4.4), since university governance involves actors from various fields. The researcher carefully selected the most appropriate types of sampling, i.e. a combination of convenience and a purposive sample, for the purpose and design of the study (Patton, 2002). Further, the retrieved information was cross-checked by consulting the informants through e-mails (Yin, 2014).

External validity is the degree to which findings can be generalized across social settings (Bryman, 2012) or can be applied to other situation (Merriam, 2009). The intensive study over small samples in qualitative research upsurges the understanding of the cases but reduces the generalization of the findings. The generalization of the findings of the current study can work in other similar contexts but not in other situations (Bryman, 2012). For example, the findings may be similar, if student participation is studied at the institutional level of governance at TU and KU from a neutral view point, but not from a view supporting to the political ideology or university authority. The researcher minimized the bias as much as possible, by involving stakeholders from five different categories in interviews at both universities. This was another attempt to maintain external validity (Cohen et al., 2007).

### ***Reliability***

In qualitative research, the reliability of the findings depends on the recurrence of the original data or potential replication (Peräkylä, 2004), and how the data are interpreted (Silverman, 2001). To ensure reliability, Lewis and Ritchie (2003) outline two different ways: by carrying out checks on the quality of the data and its interpretation, and by conveying the readers about the thorough information about the process. In this research, semi-structured interviews and documents were organized and conducted in a consistent and transparent manner to ensure reliability. All official documents (university acts and reports, UGC guidelines and annual reports, HOE reports, etc.) were collected in the same manner from reliable sources by consulting the officials of universities, UGC and HOE. All semi-structured interviews were conducted in the similar settings (their offices, their university and office hours). The interviewees were also provided with space to provide the information they considered

important for the investigation of the study. All the interviewees were treated in the same manner and through the same procedure (contact them through official way, by providing them copies of letter of the University of Oslo (UiO), asking their consent for interviews, fixing interview venue and time, asking their consent for recordings, etc.).

Regarding working with the data, preparation and presentation were also organized and conducted through systematic, transparent and thorough process to safeguard the reliability of the findings. The recurrent feedbacks and guidance from supervisors of this study were further attempts to establish reliability of the findings in the study (Yin, 2014).

## **4.7 Ethical issues**

There are two ethical issues to be taken into serious consideration for this research. The researcher took responsibility to secure the actual permission and interest of all those involved in the study. The researcher sought consent from the interviewees to tape the interviews. There was commitment not to misuse any of the information collected to maintain certain moral responsibilities towards the participants. The researcher was also determined towards a duty to protect the rights of people as well as their privacy and sensitivity (Bryman, 2012). For this, the purpose of the study was explained to the respondents. The participants were ensured that their information would be used only for this study and not for any another purposes. The respondents' name and identity were anonymized.

The ethical concerns usually illustrate the purpose of the study, its expected outcomes and expectations from the participants to the respondents. In this context, the University of Oslo provided an introduction letter, which stated the researcher was a student on field study for educational purposes. Each of the respondents was provided a copy of the letter. The copies of the letter were also given to TU and KU for permission of the university authorities. They were also informed about the aim of the study with an interview guideline to get an expected outcome of the study. During the interview process, the researcher did his best to ensure confidentiality in the respondents with a hope of getting as much information as possible in a real context.

## 5 Data Presentation and Analysis

This chapter presents data collected through interviews and documents, and analyses the data at the same time. The presentation follows the order of the research questions. The cases of TU and KU are presented in parallel. The first three sections of this chapter provide detailed information about how students are participating in TU and KU governance. It includes the types, intensity levels and outcomes of student participation in university governance (decision-making process) of TU and KU. The final section concentrates and emphasizes similarities and differences between TU and KU in the study.

### 5.1 Type of participation in TU and KU

The categorization of student participation in different types depends on various aspects such as: how the universities are governed, how students are involved in the governance, and what the factors of their motivation are. This section presents data keeping these aspects in mind.

#### 5.1.1 Nature of governance in TU and KU

Interviewees agreed on the fact that TU largely depends on the public fund. The financial dependency on the government has put TU under pressure to be guided or influenced by the government and its political structures (Khaniya, 2007; MoE, 2013/14). One of the teachers of TU mentioned this as follows: *Yes, it's true that its financial dependency is one of the reasons for TU to hear the government and act accordingly (Interview, August, 2014).* The interviewees argued that changes in the government and its political structures influence the structures and policies at TU. One of the student leaders of TU expresses this as: *University authorities and some major educational policies are changed according to wish of the new structure of the government and its political ideologies (Interview, August, 2014).* From this statement, it is clear that the government has an influential role in the governance or decision-making process at TU. The university indeed does not want the government's influence but it is forced to act according to the wishes of government.

The university authorities are responsible for university decision-makings and their implementation at KU (Khaniya, 2007; MoE, 2013/14). The university authorities manage its finance, university educational and administrative policies and programs, etc. The vice-

chancellor of KU elaborated to this point as follows: *We get small amount (fund) from UGC, but we take care of our university by ourselves. We make decisions by ourselves. We don't care any kind of external interference in our university (Interview, August, 2014).* The statement makes it clear that KU receives a very small amount of its budget from the Nepal government through UGC. However, the government has no major role in the university steering and its decision-making process. The university authorities are free to make their decision. KU manages its expenses and governs the university independently without any external influences from the government and its political structure.

### **5.1.2 Institutional level of Participation**

According to *Tribhuvan University Act, 2049 (Tribhuvan University, 1992)* and *Kathmandu University Act, 2048 (Kathmandu University, 1991)*, students participate at institutional level in the university governance. All of the interviewees agreed with this fact, and representing the responses one of the deans of TU expressed this as: *Yes, we have some student representatives, who are involved in the governance of our university, i.e. in the TU Assembly, at institutional level in our university (Interview, August, 2014).* In connection to Kathmandu University, one of the teachers from the school of management stated this as: *Students are among the many actors, who participate through their representatives at institutional level, i.e. the KU Senate of the university (Interview, August, 2014).* These statements denote to the institutional level (the TU Assembly and the KU Senate) of student participation in the governance of TU and KU.

The TU Assembly (TU Council) and the KU Senate are the supreme decision-making bodies of TU and KU respectively (Tribhuvan University, 1992; Kathmandu University, 1991). These bodies involve various stakeholders including students in the decision-making processes, and major decisions are made in these bodies. In connection to the TU Assembly, the vice-chancellor of TU illustrated the provision of student participation as follows: *TU Council is the supreme decision-making body of the university. We do have participation from our all internal and external stakeholders. And students are among them. (Interview, August, 2014).* Regarding the KU Senate, one of the former student leaders said: *The most powerful body of KU is its Senate. The KU Senate is the highest body within the university. It formulates policies involving various agents including student member. And the other bodies carry out the policies (Interview, August, 2014).* The given statements indicate to the

provision of student participation in the supreme decision-making bodies of both universities. The TU Assembly and the KU Senate are responsible to make major decisions at institutional level in their universities on various topics: university finance, academic and administrative programs and policies by involving various stakeholders, including students.

There is no provision of student participation in other major bodies responsible for university governance. The vice-chancellor of TU said this as: *TU has four other responsible bodies for the governance and management of the university, but there is no such system to include student (Interview, August, 2014)*. In support, one of the former student leaders from KU stated this as: *No, we have no student participants in Executive Council, Academic Council and Deans. Student involvement is only in KU Senate at KU (Interview, August, 2014)*. From the statements, it emerges that under the TU Assembly and the KU Senate, there are other bodies intended for the execution of the decisions or policies and also for performing academic and administrative tasks of the university. There are four bodies under the TU Assembly: Executive Council, Academic Council, Research Coordination Council and Planning Council at TU, whereas under the KU Senate: Executive Council, Academic Council and Deans at KU. These bodies, however, do not have any provision of student participation (Tribhuvan University, 1992; Kathmandu University 1991).

There are two student representatives in the TU Assembly (Council) out of 52 members covering wide range of areas (see Appendix 3): Chancellor, vice-chancellor, deans, teacher representatives, student representative, etc. (Tribhuvan University, 1992). In concerning this, one of the student leaders, expressed his experience in this way: *I am also a member there in the TU Assembly. TU Assembly is big body which consists of 52 members. The members are from various fields (Interview, August, 2014)*. In the KU Senate, there is only one student member out of 35 members from different areas (see Appendix 5): chancellor, vice-chancellor, rector, deans, members of parliament, mayors, educationists, student representative, etc. (Kathmandu University, 1991).

### **5.1.3 Process of participation**

The student representatives for the TU Assembly and the KU Senate are nominated by the Chancellor (the prime-minister of the country is the ceremonial head of TU Assembly and KU Senate) on recommendation of the Executive Councils (Tribhuvan University, 1992;

Kathmandu University, 1991). In the case of TU, two student representatives for the TU Assembly come from among the elected presidents (chairpersons) of the Free Student Unions (FSU) of TU affiliated campuses (Tribhuvan University, 1992) representing two student wings of two major political parties of the nation. There is also a provision to invite one or two student representative (s) lobbying to the third major political party. One of the teachers of TU clarified it in this way: *There is also a provision for inviting one or two student representative in the senate representing to the third or fourth major political party of the country (Interview, August, 2014).* One of the student leaders of TU shared his experience in support of this as follows:

*I am the president of the Free Student Union of central campus of TU. I am a member of TU Council. There are other two. One of them is invited member and other one is from TU affiliated campuses. Both of them are recommended by the university authorities and nominated by the chancellor of the university. [...] and yes, we are from three different political backgrounds (Interview, August, 2014).*

In case of Kathmandu University, the student participation is organized according to the alphabetical order of the schools or faculties. There are now eight schools or faculties in the university. In each school, there is a Student Welfare Council (SWC), an apolitical student body. One of the former student leaders of the KU illustrated the process of student participation in the KU Senate as follows:

*The chairperson of the Student Welfare Council is elected by and among the faculty students and nominated as a student representative for the KU Senate by alphabetical order of the faculties like Arts at first, and Education, and then Engineering, Law, Management, Medical science and Science likewise (Interview, August, 2014).*

The statement points out that the participation in KU is electoral, but non-politically base. It, however, is based on alphabetical rotation of the faculties: Arts at first, and Education, and then Engineering, and Law likewise. The tenure of the office of the nominated members in the TU Assembly and the KU Senate is for three years (Tribhuvan University (1992); Kathmandu University (1991). Student representatives in the KU Senate, however, become members for a one year, since they are changed each year by alphabetical rotation of the schools.



#### 5.1.4 Role in decision-making process

The executive bodies of TU and KU set agendas consulting to the members of the Assembly or the Senate and present the agendas in the TU Assembly or the KU Senate. To this point, the vice-chancellor of KU stated: *the executive body consults to various stakeholders and collects comments and feedbacks on the agendas. The agendas are taken to the Senate for their authorization (Interview, August, 2014).* In decision-making process, student representatives, as members of the TU Assembly or the KU Senate, are asked to register agendas of their concerns. Regarding the question (what sort of issues they raise in the TU Assembly), one of the student leaders replied: *We put the voice of the student mass and demand the facilities or services for us, the mass; we also try to protect the students' rights to: equality, participatory, information, and independence (Interview, August, 2014).*

Student interests are not limited only in academic issues and student facilities at TU. Student or their representatives equally monitor on how the university distribute its annual budget and utilizes it in different areas. They oppose the misuse of any rule, regulation and property of the university, and create pressure to the university leadership to correct the misuse of any rule, regulation and property immediately. They also make the university to address their agendas of their concerns on time. One of the student leaders expressed this as follows:

*We requested the university authorities to change the new fee structure introduced with the new the semester system in the university. But, they did not listen to us, at first. When we called for strike for few days and locked the offices of high ranked authorities, the management committee, ultimately addressed our demand to reduce the fee structure for the new semester system in the university (Interview, August, 2014).*

This expression denotes to the strong student participation in the governance or decision-making process at TU. The student representatives oppose the university leadership by closing the offices, calling for strike, and even breaking the furniture in the university, unless their voices are addressed. The oppositional stance places pressure in the university to hear them and address their agendas.

However, student representatives in KU have academic orientation to quality in education rather than monitoring non-academic activities of the university. The founder member of KU had this sort of expectation from the students or their representatives: *We never want our*

*students to be influenced by outside forces. We actually expect students to give their notions on the reasons they come to the university, their expectations from the university, the quality for the market, etc. (Interview, August, 2014).* This statement points out that KU expects academic issues from the student representatives in the decision-making process and authorizes them. Student representatives usually do not raise issues that the university does not want. One of the educationists shared his experience: *The student leaders are very professional. They bring issues of their immediate concern with very polite manner. They do not do politics here. I don't have any experience in KU that students have rejected any decision the university have made (Interview, August, 2014).*

From the data presented above, the student participation at TU is found influential in comparison to the student participation at KU. Their participation at TU is not confined to any limited areas such as: academic and non-academic. They raise any issues they are interested in and also oppose the university leadership. However, the student participation in KU is confined to academic issues and does not contradict the university leadership.

### **5.1.5 Student participation in QA process in TU and KU**

Regarding student participation in Quality Assurance (QA) process, there is a provision to have one student representative from among the presidents of university FSU in the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee (QAAC). The committee was established by University Grand Commission (UGC), an umbrella organization of HEIs (including TU and KU) in 2007 to improve quality of education in Nepal (QAAD, 2013). In this context, one of the deans of TU reported UGC and its QA activities as follows:

*University Grand Commission is the responsible body for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in context of Nepal. It is a higher body of higher education. All the university and colleges or higher education institutions are under it. [...]. It has some units to perform QAA activities and measures HEIs' performance under its framework or guideline [...]. Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee (QAAC) is the body, I think, that has one student representative (Interview, August, 2014).*

It emerges clearly from this response, that UGC is the responsible for quality assurance and accreditation of the TU and KU affiliated colleges or campuses. The UGC has prepared

regulatory framework and guidelines to ensure that HEIs to fulfill a set of criteria at institutional level. It also emerges from the response that there is student representation too.

Student participation in the QAAC is an upper (national) level of participation i.e. the institutional level. The QAAC is responsible for the development and implementation of QAA activities in HE (QAAD, 2013). In the QAA procedures, the QAA Division (QAAD- an executive body that facilitates QAAC and performs regular activities related to QAA) measures the eligibility of HEIs, sends guidelines to them to prepare Self Study Report (SSR), and forms a Peer Review Team (PRT) to evaluate the QAA status based on the SSR, (see Appendix 6 for detail). Finally, QAAC reviews the PRT report and recommends to UGC for the accreditation status. The student representative as a member of QAAC is also involved in the QAA procedures. One of the teachers of KU stated: *There is student participation in the QAA process. The student representative is equally responsible for QAA activities and its procedures (Interview, August, 2014).*

The student participation at institutional level is different. Students do not directly involve, as the members or staffs of/in the QA bodies. They are just consulted by the institutions, intended to participate in QAA process and by the PRT. The Vice-chancellor of KU shared his experience: *From our university, two schools: one, School of Engineering and the next, School of science, are accredited last year i.e. in 2013 (Interview, August, 2014).* Regarding TU, the numbers of accredited institutions affiliated to TU are 9<sup>3</sup>. Some of students from the accredited institutions have been consulted or interviewed in the process of accreditation. One of the deans of TU shared his experience:

*Some of students from the accredited institutions were contacted and collected their experiences or feedbacks on different issues by the institutions themselves to prepare Self Study Report and the Peer Review Team from UGC to evaluate the QAA status based on the Self Study Report of the institution (Interview, August, 2014).*

The statement clarifies the students' indirect participation in QAA process. Both the institutions from the universities and the PRT from UGC collect students' opinions, experience and feedback on various topics. The eligible institutions from TU and KU prepared a SSR. At the time of preparing SSR, the institutions consulted to the students. The

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ugcnepal.edu.np/page-detail/>

PRT also interacted with students, while evaluating the QAA status based on the SSR of the institution (QAAD, 2013). Students responded to their institutions and the PRT on their own day-to-day experiences and knowledge on their subject and program.

The major findings regarding the types of student participation in university governance, as presented above in this section are highlighted in the Table 4. The findings of the study on student participation are presented in terms of terms of their types in connection with their major features, as mentioned in the previous chapters (3 and 4). These findings are also important for further presentation and analysis regarding the intensity levels of their participation in the study.

Table 4: Summary of major findings in terms of types of student participation

Topics	TU	KU
Nature of governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>government has an influential role in governance because of its financial dependence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>manages its expenses and governs the university independently</li> </ul>
Institutional participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The TU Assembly (3 out of 52)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The KU Senate (1 out of 35)</li> </ul>
Process of participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>three elected presidents of the FSUs representing three political parties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>alphabetical order of the faculty</li> </ul>
Role of participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>register both academic and non-academic agendas</li> <li>oppose university leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>register only academic agendas</li> <li>support university leadership</li> </ul>
Participation in QA process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student views, feedback and comments are collected by the institution and the PRT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student views, feedback and comments are collected by the institution and the PRT</li> </ul>

## 5.2 Intensity of participation in TU and KU

This section focuses on the intensity levels of student participation in the decision-making processes at TU and KU. It also identifies the importance of their participation in decision-making. The higher level of participation refers to the higher level of importance or influence in decision-making process and university governance.

### 5.2.1 Access to information, consultation and partnership

The student representatives have access to all kind of information, by their right to information at TU and KU. One of the deans of TU expressed his view as follows: *It is their rights to have an access to all kind of information about their university. And, it is our responsibility to give them the required information without any drag and delay (Interview, August, 2014)*. This statement confirms that the students or their representatives are not deprived of right to information in both universities. The students have access to different kind of information: university policy, agendas for discussion, future plan and programs, etc.

The student participation in TU and KU is not limited just to the access to information or decisions that are already made; rather, they are involved in decision-making process. One of the deans of KU stated: *In decision making process, we send them a letter with our all agendas and ask them to provide us their comments or feedback. They are also noticed to bring their new issues within a fixed deadline (Interview, August, 2014)*. The dean stated that student representatives in the decision-making process are informed to register their agendas within a certain deadline. The student representatives are even informed of the agendas prepared by the executive bodies and asked to provide their comments or feedback on these agendas. They are consulted in the decision-making process, and their comments and feedback are collected. One of the student leaders of KU expressed his experiences on this as follows: *We are asked to provide our feedbacks and comments over the agendas prepared by the Executive bodies of TU and KU (Interview, August, 2014)*.

The finding indicated that students' feedback, views, feelings and problems are collected by the university authorities in both universities. However, students' voices, agendas and feedback are not equally considered in the decision making process of TU and KU. In TU, student participation in terms of their voice, agenda and feedback, is equally important as of

other stakeholders such as: academicians and administrators. In this regard, the vice-chancellor of TU stated as: *Students are just like other stakeholders in the decision-making process. We need their consent and support too in all areas to decide the agendas. We equally need their presence (Interview, August, 2014).* But, there are some limitations in connection with KU. Student participation is expected in limited areas. One of the educationist members of the KU Senate shared his view in this way: *Let me be frank, here. Students are important especially in the areas of their immediate and academic concerns but not equally in all areas of finance, administration, etc. (Interview, August, 2014).* This refers to the limited influence of the student participation in decision-making process at KU. Their interests are important regarding the issues of: student fee, exam schedule, regular class and student facilities, but not issues such as: finance of the university, appointment of the university authorities, etc.

From this data, it emerges that students do have equal access to all kind of information in both Universities. They are even consulted while preparing the agendas by the executive bodies of the universities. However, the influence of their participation or the consideration of their feedbacks or comments in decision-making is less, in comparison to this complete access.

### **5.2.2 Dialogue between students and university authorities**

In TU, there is more space for formal but less for informal dialogue or interaction between the students and university authorities because of its bigger size. The vice-chancellor of KU illustrated this as follows: *TU is a big institution, where students have to go through a long formal process to engage in interaction with the university authorities. I do not think the student representatives have frequent interaction with their university authorities at TU. They might have few formal but very few informal dialogue and interaction (Interview, August, 2014).* Concerning this with KU, the students are close with the university authorities and have regular contact. One of the teachers of the KU expressed: *We have close relationship and frequent interaction on formal and informal issues. I found them sharing their feelings more openly. Their participation has encouraged them for their active participation in university governance (Interview, August, 2014).*

The expression demonstrates that the students in KU have close relationship and also are engaged in regular interactions with the university authorities. The close and regular contact with university authorities has increased more openness in the university. Both the students

and the authorities do not need more formal and lengthy procedures to discuss over any immediate issue. The regular contact between them has made student participation effective, to some extent, at KU. However, this is not the case at TU. As stated, the students have lack of frequent informal meeting and contact at TU. The students have just formal interaction, referring to the formal relationship with the university authorities, but they have lack of openness and depth with each other. There is no voting system and discussions are very rare in TU Assembly and the KU Senate. One of the student leaders of TU stated this as follows: *We are disappointed. There is no voting system, and no discussions over the agendas are usual. We are excluded at the final stage. There is no meaning to be there, just to give a big hand to university decisions (Interview, August, 2014).*

Most of the interviewees want a voting system and a discussion culture in the TU Assembly and the KU Senate. The student participation, therefore, can influence the final output of decision making process. Discussions and voting over the agendas presented in the TU Assembly and the KU Senate are essential for being the student demands addressed. The major findings of the study on student participation in terms of intensity level, as presented above are highlighted in the Table 5. The findings are also important, to some extent for further presentation and analysis i.e. outcomes of student participation.

Table 5: Summary of major findings in terms of intensity levels

Topics	TU	KU
Right to information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• access to all kind of information</li> <li>• informed to register their agendas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• access to all kind of information</li> <li>• informed to register their agendas</li> </ul>
Consultation for student agendas and feedbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• areas of their interests; regardless to academic and immediate concerns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• limited to academic areas and immediate concerns</li> </ul>
Interactions and dialogues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• formal procedures and less frequent</li> <li>• formal distance between student and university authority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• both formal and informal, and more regular</li> <li>• close relation between student and university authority</li> </ul>

## 5.3 Outcomes of student participation in TU and KU

With regard to outcomes of student participation in TU and KU governance, the interviewees pointed out and focused on benefits and challenges of student participation in the governance or decision-making process. These are presented as follow:

### 5.3.1 Benefits

The student participation in the decision-making process of TU and KU has been generally beneficial for all: students, student leaders and the universities in both of the universities. The findings showed that student rights and facilities are protected and promoted. Student leaders have developed leadership skills. Close relationship, openness and regular interactions between students and university authorities have diminished tussles and fear of being misled.

In the decision-making process, student representatives have lots of responsibilities to carry out e.g.: to communicate the voice of the student mass, to protect and promote the rights of the students, to share their opinion for the betterment of the university, etc. To carry all these responsibilities out is not an easy job. However, the student representatives, as learners, have an opportunity to learn different skills at the time of carrying the responsibilities out. The vice-chancellor of TU had this view as follows: *Their participation contributes to develop leadership skills to cooperate, to tolerate, to coordinate, and to solve the issues very cunningly. The university has produced many successful leaders, who are at top position now and contributing to the country (Interview, August, 2014).* One of the student leaders of TU shared his view as follows: *The student leaders want to develop their political career in their university life. So, they can be successful leaders in future. Many successful leaders of the country today were the student leaders in the university in the past (Interview, August, 2014).*

These responses highlight the leadership skill as a benefit of student participation in university governance. Student leaders develop their leadership skill, which is a very important aspect for being a successful leader in future. TU is expected to produce such skilled human resources who can lead the country successfully.

Student participation in the governance of TU has diminished long-run tussles between university authorities and students. This is also considered as a benefit to the student



participation in TU governance. It has become a way to connect students and university authorities very closely. One of the Deans of TU put his experience in these words:

*We have good network, and started to work together. Our misunderstanding has been cleared and we have had very rare tussles. Their participation has made us easier to understand their real problems. They have known their problems very well, and they can raise their problems effectively. So, it makes easier us to address them. (Interview, August, 2014).*

This experience clearly illustrates that students know their problems better than the university authorities. Their participation has become a means to express them and clear out the misunderstanding between the authorities and the students. It is working as a remedy for diminishing the long-established conflicts in the university, TU. In case of KU, student participation in university governance has also been beneficial for creating an environment of close relationship, openness and frequent interactions between students and university authorities. It has also protected student participants from being misled by different forces. The Vice-chancellor of KU shared his views as follows: *Their participation made us very close and we interact or dialogue quite often. This has reduced the risk of misleading the immature student by various forces such as: politics, bureaucracy, and industrialist (Interview, August, 2014).* Student participation in KU has supported the university mission for quality and academic environment in the university, since it has reduced the fear of being misled by forces (government, political parties, etc.) and protected the academic environment of the KU from being spoiled by these forces.

### **5.3.2 Challenges**

Students have several challenges from inside and outside the universities, while participating in their governance. They are motivated and guided by certain interest groups. In TU, there is political interference, whereas in KU students are motivated and subordinated by the university authorities. In case of TU, one of the Deans of KU expressed it as follows:

*There is political representation in student participation in TU Council. They can't express their view openly. They feel political pressure from outside. The student-wings of different political parties fight each other to establish their supremacy in the university, and to get the sympathy or vote from the students (Interview, August, 2014).*

This expression points out that the student representatives lobbying to different political parties compete and even fight with each other, rather speaking for the rights and the problems of students. The fight is not for the students' rights; but for political establishment. In principle, their duty or responsibility is to protect the students' rights and to deal with their problems in the Assembly. They do not take the responsibility seriously. Instead of doing so, they do what the leaders of their political parties say.

In case of KU, the student representatives are under double pressures from politicians and university authorities. When they are elected in SWC, they receive phone calls from political leaders and they are even tempted to support the political parties. One of the teachers of KU said: *When the chairperson of the SWC is elected, he or she gets calls and offers from different political leaders. They are even threatened if they do not support them (Interview, August, 2014).* In support to this point, one of the former student leaders of the KU had experience of it: *There are different political parties who try to convince us to follow their ideology and agendas. I got lots of calls to be a leader of the sister-wings of their parties. When I refused their calls I was threatened. (Interview, August, 2014).*

Furthermore, in case of KU, student representatives are expected to be a listener or an observer, rather, an active member in the KU Senate, since they are considered very young and immature. In regard to this, one of the founder members of KU said this as follows:

*We expect expertise such as: professors, senate executives, etc. in the Senate. Young students may not be able to lead the case so strongly. The students who are from graduate or undergraduate level may not be matured very well. But student can be a good listener or a good observer in the Senate instead of being a good participant (Interview, August, 2014).*

This provision refers to the lack of democratic practice of equality at KU. There even lacks authorization to social organizations to defend their interests. Interviewees made a complaint that the university authorities try to keep everything under their control. They never allow students to form an organization and protect their individual rights. One of the Teachers of TU had this to state:

*There is always lack of access to social institutions and organizations like teacher association and students unions. The university tries to keep these organizations away from the university.*

(...).*Though there is an association of teachers. But it is not authorized. There is a ban to such organizations (Interview, August, 2014).*

In TU, there are different student-wings of national political parties. This is the reason for political pressure on student representatives. However, in KU there are student welfare councils in different faculties. They are very apolitical. The chairpersons of these welfare councils are elected by the faculty students but nominated by the Executive Councils for further nomination for the KU Senate. Therefore, it can be stated that, at KU, there is institutional dominance on student participation. The major findings in terms of their outcome of participation in university governance, as presented above are highlighted in the Table 6. These findings provide a base, to some extent, for further presentation and analysis regarding similarities and differences between the student participation in TU and KU.

Table 6: Summary of major findings in terms of outcomes

Topics	TU	TU
Benefits: for student leaders  for mass students  for university	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• opportunity to learn different skills</li> <li>• successful leaders in future</li> <li>• student rights and facilities are protected and promoted</li> <li>• diminished long-run tussles between university authorities and students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• opportunity to learn different skills</li> <li>• skilled human resources</li> <li>• student rights and facilities are protected and promoted</li> <li>• diminished the fear external influence</li> </ul>
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• political motivation</li> <li>• student leaders lobbying to different political ideologies are fighting or competing with each other</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• institutional motivation</li> <li>• lack of democratic culture to authorize social institutions such as student unions, teacher association to defend their interests</li> </ul>

## 5.4 Comparison between student participation in TU and KU

This section presents a comparison between the student participation in governance of TU and KU, by highlighting the major similarities and differences.

### 5.4.1 Similarities between student participation in TU and KU

As presented and analyzed in the previous sections, both universities are guided by university acts. The university acts have endowed certain functions, duties and powers to the Assembly or the Senate and also made a provision of student participation in the TU Assembly and the KU Senate. (Tribhuvan University (1992); Kathmandu University (1991)). In agendas or policy-making process at both universities, students are consulted, and they even have opportunity to register their own agenda. Agendas are prepared by the executive bodies of the universities. The Executive bodies circulate letters with agendas at least few weeks earlier the senate meeting. The student representatives are given the agendas and are also asked for their opinions or feedback. If they have any new agendas, they can register it at least one week earlier to the Assembly or the Senate meetings.

The student representatives in both of the supreme bodies at these universities are supposed to be equal to the other members of the TU Assembly and the KU Senate. In preparing agendas, all the members are consulted for the feedback and comments on the agendas. Their consents are equally important to approve the agendas. However, the culture developed in both universities to present the agendas and pass them are very autocratic. One of the student leaders of the TU shared his experience to this point as follows: *There is neither an election system nor a discussion over the agendas in TU Senate. The agendas are presented just for a formality. Amendment and cancelation are very tough. This is an autocratic system which needs to be changed (Interview, August, 2014).* One of the former student leaders of the KU had similar kind of experience at KU. She formulated her experience as follows: *Though we are consulted when they prepare agendas, we do have rare chances to discuss over them at the time the authorities present them for approval. They present the agendas in the senate just for certification (Interview, August, 2014).*

These two statements depict the autocratic nature in deciding agendas as the final outcomes of decision-making process. At the decision-taking stage, probabilities are very less to amend or cancel the agendas. When the agendas are presented, there are even less chances to insert new agendas immediately in the Assembly and the Senate. In both cases, students' voice, feedback and views on the agendas are to be addressed before the agenda presented in the TU Assembly and in the KU Senate. In this regards, the student feedback, view and issue are discussed after their collection but censored before they are addressed. And finally, the agendas are presented to the Assembly of TU and or the Senate of KU.

### **5.4.2 Differentiation in participation**

A look over the responses of interviewees indicated some major differences between student participation in the governance of TU and KU. The differences are presented based on the students' representation process and the factors that motivate or influence to the student participations in the university governance.

#### ***Electoral versus alphabetical representation***

In both universities, there is a nomination system; the student representatives are nominated by the chancellor of the university on the recommendation of the executive bodies. However, the processes of their participation are different. One of the teachers of TU stated as follows: *There is a political electoral system at TU; the chairpersons of the student unions are nominated. At Kathmandu, however, there is an apolitical electoral system; one of the chair persons of the SWC is nominated, based on the alphabetical rotation (Interview, August, 2014).* This statement makes the difference clear that the student participation is an electoral process i.e. the FSUs, whereas in KU, the participation is an apolitical i.e. alphabetical rotation of different schools by SWC.

#### ***Political versus institutional dominance***

Most of the respondents agreed upon the fact that there is a strong political influence in TU and an institutional domination in KU. One of the Educationist members of KU formulated his experiences as follows: *The student leaders who are involved in TU Council are somehow influenced or manipulated by particular political parties, but there is no such type of influence on the student leaders of Kathmandu University (Interview, August, 2014).* One of

the student leaders of TU supported to this point and gave a reason for it: *The student leaders want to develop their political career in their university life. [...]. So they are in touch with their political leaders. The politicians try to transport political ideologies or activities through their student-wings i.e. student unions (Interview, August, 2014).* These statements point out that student representatives are politically motivated at TU. The political parties transport political ideologies and establish strong influence of their political parties in the university through the student unions and their representatives.

The power of the student representatives to make their participation influential in decision-making of the university rests upon the student unions, since the student unions have political connection at both local and national level. One of the educationists had a reason for this: *Because, they have strong student union i.e. politicized and named as student-wings of political parties. And they raise strong voice at the top level of university governance in the TU Assembly. (Interview, August, 2014).* The political connection empowers and encourages student leaders in TU to raise students' issues and their interests at the university level i.e. institutional levels. The student representatives, therefore, try to unite students in student unions or student wings of their lobbying political parties. They want to inaugurate their political career from their university life. The student representatives of different students-wings compete and even fight with each other to make their influence strong in the university. They compete to make university decisions in their favor. So, they can win the election of FSU for the next time and establish political dominance of their party in the university.

The finding showed that the student representatives in KU are found to be motivated by the university authorities. They do not oppose the university leadership. In this regard, one of the educationist members expressed his view as follows: *They are very professionals and they don't reject any decision the university makes (Interview, August, 2014).* One of the student leaders of the TU illustrated to this point further as follows: *Though there are student representatives in the KU Senate, they are not guided by themselves. They are motivated, manipulated and forced by the university management. Though there is a bit change in the recent days, but it is not at a large scale (August, 2014).* The statements illustrate that the student participation in the KU governance is problematic to the university or the authorities. The university expects the students to be a good listener or a good observer in the senate instead of being a good participant.

In this regard, student participation in decision-making bodies at TU and KU is different. The participations are backed by national politics in TU. The student representatives oppose the university leadership, if their voices are not heard or agendas are not addressed. They ultimately place pressure on the university to meet their demands. In case of KU, the student participation is largely expected in relation to academic matters. The student leaders do not oppose the university leadership in a general manner.

The major findings of the study on student participation in the governance of TU and KU, as presented above in this chapter are highlighted in the Table 7. These findings concern with the types, intensity levels and outcomes of student participation in university governance. The major findings on student participations in these universities are discussed in the following chapters with reference to the themes of the analytical framework and the literature reviews.

Table 7: Summary of major findings of the study

Topics:	TU	KU
Types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• participation just to the TU Assembly</li> <li>• political orientation</li> <li>• no active membership in QAA process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• participation just to the KU Senate</li> <li>• Academic commitment</li> <li>• no active membership in QAA process</li> </ul>
Intensity levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• student feedback, agendas and comments are collected in decision-making and QAA processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• student feedback, agendas and comments are collected in decision-making and QAA processes</li> </ul>
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• diminished long-run tussles between university authorities and students</li> <li>• internal conflict between and among the student leaders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• diminished fear of external influence and protected academic environment</li> <li>• institutional dominance</li> </ul>

## 6 Discussion

The discussion is carried out by addressing the research questions and themes of importance emerging from the analyzed data. The discussion first presents a brief summary of the major findings, by answering each research question, and elaborates on this in relation to the reviewed literature. The first two research questions are discussed with reference to the analytical framework that incorporates the types and the intensity of student participation in university governance as proposed by Jungblut (2011) and Klemenčič (2011). The third research question is used to discuss the outcomes in terms of benefits and challenges of student participation in university governance. The final research question discusses a comparison between the student participation in TU and KU. The section ends with a discussion of the limitation of the study and a brief closing remark.

### 6.1 What types of participation do students have in the governance of TU and KU?

The data indicated that there is a provision of student participation in both decision-making and the QAA processes. In the decision-making process of TU and KU, students or their representatives participate through politically motivated student unions in the TU Assembly, and they participate through apolitical alphabetical rotation of schools or faculties in the KU Senate. In QAA process, students participate as members of QAAC at national level, whereas their views, experience, comments and feedback are collected with regard to various topics at institutional level. The institutions affiliated to TU or KU collect comments, views or feedback to prepare their SSR. The PRT also collects students' views or feedback to evaluate the QAA status of the institution, intended to involve in QAA process, based on the SSR.

The findings indicated that student *participation is limited to/in the supreme decision-making bodies* of the universities: the TU Assembly and the KU Senate. However, there are various boards and department committees in the universities. There is no provision of students' direct participation, as members in the bodies such as: executive councils, academic councils, etc. These bodies play crucial role in decision-making process by setting agendas, executing decisions and performing academic and administrative tasks of the university. The student participation, limited to the TU Assembly and the KU Senate, contradicts Obiero (2012), who



found that students are involved in different university boards and department committees while participating in the governance of Kenyatta University. The findings, however, corroborate, to some extent, to the first type of student participation as identified by Jungblut (2011), i.e. student participation in academic self-governance. In this type, student representatives are supposed to participate in one or more university boards and department committees as their members.

*Political activism* in the student participation at KU was identified, as very limited and the student representatives, as politically apathetic. As stated, the student representatives in the KU Senate come from apolitical student welfare councils, and they selected based on alphabetical order of the schools or faculties: Arts at first, and Education, and then Engineering, Law, Management, Medical science and Science. This indicates an apolitical nature of student participation in the governance of KU. The apolitical nature refers to *academic orientation* among students and university authorities for the academic progress in an academic environment in the university. The academic orientation for academic progress in the university upholds the argument of shared commitment between students and the university authorities for academic progress in an academic environment, as discussed in the first type of student participation.

The student representatives at KU are motivated to qualify themselves for their professional career, as Clark, (1998) and Cloete and Fehnel, (2002) maintained the student participation in the market oriented view of university governance. In the market oriented view of university governance, students, as the clients or consumers of HE, safeguard their interests and their rights through their representation in the decision making process. However, the student representatives in the TU Assembly come from among the FSU of TU affiliated campuses. The student participation in the TU Assembly is politically motivated, which is the most dominant feature in the second type of student participation. The findings indicated that there are three student representatives in the TU Assembly from three student unions lobbying to the three different political parties. All of the TU affiliated campuses do have such student unions with a certain structures and norms, as Klemenčič (2014) points out that most of the HEIs around the world have ‘student political organizing’ (student government). The student governments represent the collective student body and intermediate to other stakeholders of HE or wider political context. The findings corroborate these arguments by Klemenčič (2014). The elected presidents of the FSU represent the collective body of the students in TU

Assembly and intermediate to other stakeholders of TU within university and national political parties in wider context.

The findings showed that the student representatives in the TU Assembly have oppositional stance or attitude in decision-making process. Their oppositional stance in the decision-making process corroborates the argument by Altbach (2006), who points out that the student unions lobbying to activist orientation tend to be oppositional in nature and leftist in terms of political ideology. The students become violent unless their voices are addressed on time. In the similar way, the student representatives oppose the university leadership at TU. They call for strike, close the offices of the university authorities and even break the university furniture. They, ultimately place pressure and force the university to address their non-academic issues as well. In doing so, they take support of the student mass as well as the political parties, which they are lobbying to.

As stated earlier, there is a provision of the student participation at both national and institutional levels in QAA process. Their participation at the national and institutional levels upholds the ideas of active and passive form of participation in QA process from the developmental perspective, as mentioned in the analytical framework. At the national level, their participation is active, because they are members of QAAC, whereas at the institutional levels, it is passive, because they do not participate as members of QA panels (Jungblut, 2011). However, students' opinions, experiences and feedback on various topics are collected by the institutions affiliated to TU and KU to prepare SSR, and to evaluate the QAA status of the institution based on the SSR by the PRT. In this QA process, most of the students from TU and KU reported to share their issues based on their day-to-day knowledge or experience of the respective study program. In connection to Klemenčič's (2011) argument, it appears easier to become involved in such a situation, where students are not perceived as being members of the academic community, but rather as clients or consumers with a limited interest in the HEIs. Students' passive participation in QAA process at TU and KU refers to the initiation of their participation in university governance, but it is not an influential participation.

## **6.2 What is the level of student participation in the governance of TU and KU?**

The findings indicated that the student representatives of the TU Assembly and the KU senate have access to information and even consulted and engaged in two-way communication such as: interaction and dialogue to provide their views, comments and issues of their interests or concerns. Students' interests at KU are oriented to the academic issues such as: quality education but not to the non-academic issues such as: staff appointment and misuse of university property, whereas students' issues are not confined to academic and non-academic areas at TU. Student representatives at TU are backed by the major national political parties, and they oppose the university leadership and even place pressures to the leadership to consider their comments and issues on time, whereas the student representatives at KU do not oppose the university leadership and do not force the leadership to address their non-academic issues. However, the regular contact between the students and the university authorities place pressure to the university leadership to address the academic issues and comments of the students.

Students and their representatives in both universities have an access to information. It means that there is no restriction for any kind of information. They are provided all type of information by their fundamental right to information. Student participation in the form of access to information is a minimal level of participation. It is also a one-way provision: university or college just provides information or decisions to student representatives (Klemenčič, 2011). The findings, however, indicated the student participation beyond the access to information. The student representatives of the TU Assembly and the KU Senate are consulted and engaged in different two-way communications such as: interaction and dialogues, as second and third intensity level of student participation. The student representatives are consulted by the executive bodies while setting the university agendas, as it is expected by Klemenčič's (2011) at the second intensity level of participation. The student representatives are provided with the university agendas for their comments. They are also asked to raise issues of their interests which are mainly concerns with students' facilities and services.

The findings showed that student interests in KU are oriented to academic issues such as: teaching, library, internet facilities, etc., but their interests in TU are not limited to academic

and non-academic issues of students' rights and facilities. They discuss strongly on the issues of university annual budget, staff appointment and misuse of university rules and regulations, and university property. The areas or the issues of student participation, hereby, at TU and KU match Bergan's (2003) two distinct aspects: student-areas and non-student areas. The student areas cover the academic issues (areas) of teaching, research and public service, whereas the non-student areas include non-academic issues of finance, staff appointment, administrative tasks. Bergan (2003) argues that the legal framework in HE defines the student and non-student areas of their participation in university governance. The findings regarding the provision of areas of student participation in the governance of TU and KU contradict this argument by Bergan (2003). Though, KU expects only academic issues from their student representatives in the decision-making process, there is no legal provision regarding the issues or the areas of student participation in both universities.

The findings indicated that consideration of student issues or comments in decision-making process by the universities depends on the student movements, political scope of the student representatives at TU, whereas it depends on the dialogue or the regular interaction between the student representatives and the university authorities at KU. The chances for considering the student comments or issues by the university is very rare or low at the second intensity level of student participation as discussed in the analytical framework. The findings of student participation in case of TU and KU are not in line with this idea. However, the consideration of the student comments and issues substantiates the argument stated in the third intensity level of student participation i.e. dialogue. At this level, some of the student issues or comments are considered in decision-making process (Klemenčič, 2011). The dialogue or interaction between the student representatives and the university authorities are more often at KU, where the dialogues create pressure on university authorities to address academic issues of their immediate concern. But, the non-academic student issues are heavily censored and have no guarantee to affect the final decision as also stated by Klemenčič, (2011).

Considering student representatives in case of TU, the findings revealed that the student representatives are backed or supported by the major national political parties. This finding is in line with the argument by Klemenčič (2011) that the student movements and the political scope of student unions are the factors to make student participation influential. The university authorities are forced to address the students' issues while drafting the university agendas. If the student issues at TU are not addressed on time, the student representatives take

support of their political parties as well as the student mass. They perform revolutionary activities such as: call for strike or close the offices of high ranked university authorities and destroy the university furniture. It makes student participation at TU more intensive than at KU. However, the student participation in none of the universities (TU and KU) is at the partnership level as assumed by Klemenčič (20011). Students at this level are expected to be equal partners and share equal responsibilities in the decision-making process. They are also expected to delegate particular implementation or monitoring activities (ibid). As discussed earlier, the students in both universities are limited to the TU Assembly and the KU Senate, though there are other bodies responsible for formulation, implementation and monitoring university decisions made in the TU Assembly and the KU Senate. And, students do not actively delegate in particular implementation or monitoring activities in the decision-making process of TU and KU. Hence, the student participation in these universities contradicts in the line of partnership as stated in the literature.

### **6.3 What are the outcomes of student participation in the governance of TU and KU?**

The findings indicated that student participation in the governance of TU and KU has benefited the student mass, their representatives and the universities. Students' rights and facilities have been protected and promoted. The student representatives have gained leadership skills. The long-standing conflicts between students and the university authorities have been diminished at TU. Their participation in the governance of KU has protected students from being misled by the external forces such as: politics, and also protected the academic environment in the university. Along with the benefits, their participation has posed some threats in their participation from inside and outside the universities. Their participation ratio is very small. The student representatives are manipulated by the political parties at TU and by the university authorities at KU.

As stated, student participation in both universities has been beneficial for the students, their leaders and the universities. Their participation has represented and defended the student interests concerning with rights and facilities. The student participation in these universities upholds the argument by ESU (2011), Klemenčič (20014) and Zuo and Ratsoy (1999), who argue that participation in decision-making is a participatory right to represent and defend the

interests of students. Zuo (1995) and Obiero (2012) extended and elaborated student rights and facilities in their empirical studies that corroborate the benefits to the student participation at TU and KU. The student representatives, as stakeholders of the universities have shared the views of the collective student body and raised different academic and non-academic issues. Their views or issues have been addressed, to some extent, which has contributed to protect the student right and their interests.

The student representatives in the TU Assembly and the KU Senate have been personally benefited to gain different leadership skills. This finding verifies the results of empirical studies carried out by Lizzio and Wilson (2009) and Obiero (2012). The studies showed that student participation in one of the Australian metropolitan university and Kenyatta University respectively, has become beneficial for developing divergent thinking and the leadership skills that would be expected to enable the student representatives to fit or exist in the bigger society. In respect to TU and KU, the student representatives have performed various tasks while participating in the decision-making process. They cooperate and coordinate with university authorities, students unions (TU) or welfare council (KU) and the student mass. They act cunningly to communicate the students' views in decision-making bodies and compete with all other stakeholders. Visser et al. (1998) argue that the tasks such as: communicating, coordinating and competing are not easy to carry out for student representatives, but they take these tasks as opportunities to empower them and involve actively in a bigger society outside the university. The findings align with this argument. Many of the political leaders of the country today were student leaders at TU in the past. KU is also found to produce skilled leaders who are serving on top positions of different national and international organizations.

As mentioned, the student participation in the university governance has reduced the long-run tussle or conflict between the university authorities. This finding corroborates Obiero's (2012) results in his empirical studies of Kenyatta University. The student participation at Kenyatta University was a means to bring the students and the university authorities closer and make them interactive. The close relation and more interaction encouraged students to share their ideas, problems and even comments or feedbacks on university policies and programs. In the same manner, the student participation at TU and KU has bridged the distance between the students and the university authorities. The participation has made it easier to the students to express their problems openly and to the university authorities to know the students' problem

clearly and address them. The participation has, thus, become a means to reduce the conflict at TU. However, their participation sometimes has become a cause of internal conflicts between and among the student representatives lobbying to different political parties. Student representatives compete to each other to establish dominance of their lobbying political parties in the university. On the other hand, the student participation at KU has protected student leaders from being influenced by the outside forces (politics, bureaucracy, and industrialist). The participation has contributed to support the university mission for quality education and solely academic environment in the university. This finding corroborates the argument by Obondo (2000): the student participation in decision-making makes students more positive towards the objectives of the university.

As stated, student representatives of the TU Assembly and the KU Senate have some challenges to face while participating in the governance of their universities. There is no voting system and the discussions are very rare in the TU Assembly and the KU Senate. This finding contradicts Obiero's (2012) findings in Kenyatta University in Kenya. There is a voting system in the Senate and discussions are quite easy. However, the ratio of student members with non-student members in Kenyatta University is very low. The TU Assembly and the KU Senate also have less numbers of student representatives. The low student number in both universities is problematic for them to make decisions in favor of the students, since there is no equal membership. In both cases students' voices, feedback, views are censored at first, and after that they are considered or addressed while drafting the agendas or before the agenda presented in the TU Assembly and in the KU Senate. This has posed a big threat to the student participation to struggle against this background and ensure their position.

The findings indicated that there is political manipulation at TU and institutional dominance at KU in relation to the student participation in university governance. The argument of external (government or political parties) influence in university governance matches Olsen's (2007) instrumental view of university governance. A university is supposed to be an instrument to meet the predetermined objects of the external forces such as: the government and its political structures. TU, as a public funded university, is highly influenced by the government and its political structures. The student leaders of the TU Assembly appear to be directly and indirectly influenced or motivated by particular political parties. The student representatives at the TU have a political background, elected and nominated on political

electoral basis. They are in touch with their political leaders and transport political ideologies or activities.

The finding showed that the student representatives of the KU Senate are motivated by the university authorities. The university has not legalized the democratic practice to establish social organization such as: teacher unions and student unions to defend their interests, in the university. The argument of institutional dominance in the university governance upholds Olsen's (2007) institutional view of university governance that assumes university as an autonomous institution. The internal stakeholders govern the university. KU is a self-funded and self-governed university. The university authorities are powerful and responsible for the governance of the university. The idea of powerful university authorities (academic and administrators) corresponds to the type (mode) of governance known as; the community of scholars.

The decision making power in the community of scholars rests on the senior academics based on their ranks and term (Olsen, 2007). In such situation, the student representatives are motivated and dominated by the university authorities. The student participation motivated or dominated by the senior academics and authorities also corroborates Luescher-Mamashela (2010), who stated students as junior fellows in meritocratic community of scholars. The senior academics and the university authorities have a final say in the decision-making. The smaller size of KU and the regular contacts (formal and informal) between the student representatives and the university authorities are two major factors of dominance on the student representatives. It, however, protects student representatives and even students to be guided by the outside forces: politics, bureaucracy and market, at KU. The regular contacts between them deprive student representatives to oppose the university leadership and its decisions in the university. Lack of experience and immaturity of student representatives are also the reasons of university domination on the student participation and the student representatives at KU.

## **6.4 What are the main differences between student participation in the governance of TU and KU?**

The findings indicated that the student participation, as active member in the university governing bodies is limited to the TU Assembly and the KU Senate. Students' comments,



feedback and issues are collected and censored by the university authorities before the university agendas are presented in the TU Assembly and the KU Senate. In this situation, their participation contradicts the statement made by the Prague Communiqué (2001) to strengthen student participation as partners or full members at every level of decision-making in HEIs. The decision-making in university governance takes place at different levels such as: subject or program, faculties, university boards, university councils, etc. Student participation is expected to take place at all these levels and boards with equal share and responsibilities. However, the student participation in both TU and KU is limited to the TU Assembly and the KU Senate.

As stated, the student participation in the governance of TU and KU is politically and institutionally dominated. The politically or institutionally dominated student participation contradicts Klemenčič's (2012a) notion of policy network or collaborative action of negotiation and meditation among various stakeholders in university governance and its decision-making process. Mutual understanding, consensus and negotiation among the key stakeholders: administrators, faculty members, students and the members of support staff, is very essential for effective governance of university. Mutual understanding or consensus for effective university governance is only possible, when all the stakeholders are equal and share equal responsibilities freely or independently in all manners. However, the student representatives at *TU* are motivated by the major political parties of the country.

On the other hand, the student representatives in KU are motivated by the institution or by the university authorities. In both universities, they are not found to be independent and autonomous in sharing their own experiences and views in their university governance, as Jungblut (2011) points out: '*(...) student structure needs to decide for itself which issues fall in the scope of their work and which do not*' (p.76). The political representation and the conflict among the student representatives lobbying to different political parties are the examples of lack of independency in student participation at TU. The limited access, only to academic issues or areas, lack of a democratic provision to legalize student unions that defend their interests are the examples of lack of independence in student participation at KU.

Major results of the study on student participation in the governance of TU and KU, as discussed above are summarized in the Table 8. The results are further discussed and

synthesized in the closing section (6.6) of this chapter and the final chapter (7) to reach a conclusion of the study.

Table 8          Summary of the discussion

Topic	TU	KU
<b><i>Types</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• institutional participation: the TU Assembly</li> <li>• political orientation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• institutional participation: the TU Assembly</li> <li>• academic orientation</li> </ul>
<p>student agendas:</p> <p><b><i>Intensity levels</i></b></p> <p>decision-making:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• depends on student interests</li> <li>• collected and censored by the university authorities</li> <li>• oppositional stance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• expected academic issues</li> <li>• collected and censored by the university authorities</li> <li>• supportive role</li> </ul>
<p>benefits:</p> <p><b><i>Outcomes</i></b></p> <p>challenges:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• diminished long run conflict between student and university</li> <li>• motivated by the political parties</li> <li>• lack of voting system and discussions are rare</li> <li>• internal conflict among student representatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• diminished the fair of external influence such as: politics, government</li> <li>• motivated by the institution/ university</li> <li>• lack of a provision to legalize unions</li> <li>• lack of voting system and discussions are rare</li> </ul>
<b><i>Results ( of discussion)</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has little influence in decision-making = less effective participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has little influence in decision-making = less effective participation</li> </ul>
<b><i>Recommendation</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• requires attention and efforts of key actors for effective student participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• requires attention and efforts of key actors for effective participation</li> </ul>

## 6.5 Methodological reflection

Student participation in university governance is a wide notion, since university governance includes various dimensions: how the university makes its decisions, how its executive bodies execute and monitor the decisions, how it manages funding and performs its academic and administrative tasks, how its qualities are controlled and assured, etc. at different levels.

However, the current study has limited its focus mainly on student participation in the decision-making and quality assurances at institutional level of TU and KU, due to practical considerations of time, resources and the nature of the study (i.e., master thesis).

The study has collected and analyzed the responses from 12 purposively sampled participants. From a wide range of stakeholders (see in Appendixes 3 for TU and 5 for TK) of university governance, only 5 groups: a) vice-chancellors, b) deans, c) members of the Assembly and the Senate, d) teachers, and e) student leaders, are selected to represent the wide range in each case of student participation. Student participation varies across different contexts and institutional modes. The limitation implies that the findings only serve to understand the conditions in which the study is undertaken, and how students participate in the governance of these two universities: TU and KU.

As stated in the methods section, the documents were not a major data source in the study. However, the analysis on available documents: university act, university and UGC reports, etc. was intended to construct a base for further investigation of the research topic and complement to the interviews. Many of the concepts highlighted in the documents may not be directly relevant to this study; however, they have been used as backdrop for understanding the legal provision of student participation in university governance. It is also a key point to mention that the study, being qualitative in nature (case study), has no intentions for generalizing the results, but instead a deeper understanding of the particular cases of student participation at TU and KU.

## 6.6 Closing remarks

The results indicated that student participation in the governance of TU and KU is dominated and has lots of limitations. Major national political parties at TU and university authorities at KU are dominant in decision-making and in student participation as well. The university

authorities expect feedback, comments and agendas in certain areas and even censor them with regard to university decisions. Regarding student participation in the final outcome of university the decisions-making (policies) process, the students have limited influence; since there is no voting system and the discussion are very rare in the TU Assembly and the KU Senate. The amendment, cancelation and insertion of decisions are not easy or possible in a easy manner in the supreme bodies of both universities. This is an autocratic culture that weakens student influence and their participation in decision-making process or in university governance. In this regard, the weak student participation at both TU and KU can not contribute to effective university governance. The effective governance requires mutual efforts of all key actors, who are equal to each other and share equal responsibilities in university governance. In this regard, student participation in both universities needs attention and efforts of their actors to safeguard the students' rights of equal participation and promote their participation for effective university governance.

## 7 Conclusion and Recommendation

This final chapter consists of three sections. The first section discusses the major findings and synthesizes them towards reaching a conclusion. The second section identifies and discusses implication of this study relevant to those bodies involved in the university governance and responsible for making the student participation effective. The final section recommends some topics for further exploration and explanation.

### 7.1 Conclusion of the study

As stated in the introductory part of this study, there is a great need of empirical studies that document and analyze student participation in university governance, especially in developing countries. In Nepal, there are little to no insights provided by the conceptual literature or empirical studies on student participation in university governance. The current study aimed to shed light on student participation in the decision-making processes at TU and KU. In doing so, the study sought to identify the types and the intensity levels of student participation within the universities. It also aimed to observe the outcome of their participation and compare between the participation in these two universities. To achieve these aims, the study was guided by a general research question: *How do students participate in the governance of Tribhuvan University (TU) and Kathmandu University (KU)?*

The findings of this study indicated that student participation in decision-making and QAA processes at TU and KU is displayed and distributed across different types, intensity levels and outcomes. Political orientation in the student participation at TU and academic motivation at KU are major reasons of differences in terms of their types. Students' oppositional stance in decision-making makes student participation comparatively more intense at TU than students' supportive role in decision-making at KU. Regarding the outcomes, the student participation has benefited all the students, their representatives and the universities. The students have opportunities to launch their own agendas and provide comments or feedback to the university agendas. Their participation has brought the students and the university authorities close to each other and contributed to diminish long-standing tussles at TU and fear of external influence at KU. The student representatives have also offered opportunities to learn different skills that are expected to enable them to fit in the society demands.

Besides the benefits, the student participation in the governance of TU and KU has several threats that weaken their participations. The student representatives are motivated and dominated politically at TU and institutionally in KU. The student participation represents the major political parties of the nation, and student representatives are expected to transport political ideologies or activities in the university at TU, whereas the student participation is apolitical but motivated by the university authorities at KU. The student representatives at KU raise only academic issues that the university expects from them, and do not oppose the university leadership, unlike the student representatives at TU. The student representatives at TU are politically backed up, and the participation is not confined into any limited areas such as: academic and non-academic. The student representatives oppose the university leadership and university decisions, if their voices or agendas are not addressed on time. They can even force the university to meet their demands.

The student participation, however, in the governance of both universities is not influential, as it is expected by Klemenčič (2011) and the Prague Communiqué (2001) at partnership level. At partnership level, students are expected to participate and share equal responsibilities in university governance: decision-making processes. In both QA and decision-making processes, there is passive type of student participation within the universities from the developmental perspective of student participation. Students' feedbacks, comments or views on academic and nonacademic issues are collected and censored by the university authorities and the QAA bodies. On the other hand, the student participation in the governance of TU and KU is limited to the TU Assembly and the KU Senate. Their participation in the TU Assembly and the KU Senate is just a formality or simple representation, since there is no voting system and the discussions over the agendas very rare in these bodies. The ratio of student participation is very small, and it does not strongly enable them to make decisions in their favor. Overall, the student participation at both TU and KU is not influential, rather limited and dominated by political parties and university authorities in the governance of these universities.

## 7.2 Practical implications

The findings of this research study have the potential to identify and discuss some implications relevant for those bodies involved in the university governance and responsible for making the student participation effective. The students, their representatives, political parties and the university authorities are the primary actors in the governance of TU and KU. Their efforts are essential to make the student participation influential, independent and effective.

The student representatives are considered young and immature in comparison to the other stakeholders. Political parties and institutions (university authorities) usually take the immaturity as a weak point and attempt to motivate students to work in favor of the university authorities and the political parties. Such political and institutional attempts to motivate and use immature students weaken the student participation and make university governance less effective. In such a situation, TU and KU have a responsibility to encourage and empower the student representatives, as argued by Zuo and Ratsoy (1999), to keep interest in all the activities taking place in the university and save them from being corrupted by other interest groups. The students do have rights to participate and share equal responsibilities in all through the university governance processes, because they are ultimately affected by the decisions that are made in the universities. It is also a responsibility of these two universities to pay more attention to students' increased participation, and to encourage student representatives to express their feelings or problems.

The findings also indicated that student representatives at TU and KU are responsible themselves for their weak participation in the university governance. The student representatives have a responsibility, as suggested by Bergan (2003) and ESU (2009) to be critical and creative in understanding and communicating the problems of the student mass. The creative understanding and critical thinking of the student representatives is reflected on their awareness of the factors (political parties and university authorities) that motivate or influence them, and the creativity is also reflected on their attempts to maintain a distance between/among student representatives, political parties and university authorities. The creative understanding and critical thinking are expected to contribute the student representatives to know the motives or the reasons of motivation and inspire them to act wisely in university governance. It is a misunderstanding that the student representatives need

full support from the political parties or the university authorities to meet student issues or agendas, and that they can do nothing without the political or university support. The student representatives are required to know that they are backed up by the student mass, which they represent to. The student mass helps them in moment of need. If the representatives feel that they are dominated, neglected and deprived of their rights, they can convey the message by organizing workshops, rallies and seminars to the student mass. At such movement, the power of the student mass works indeed to pressurize the concerned factors to address the voice of the students and to treat the student representatives as equal partners.

The findings also suggested that the system of student representation through student-wings of the major political parties in TU is better to be adjusted. It is very complex to create solely academic environment in the university, if there is political intervention, and the academic environment is very essential for the better outcome of HE in universities. The HE outcome has direct and indirect impact on students at first and society ultimately, since the students are the backbones of the futures of the society. It is, therefore, always not good even for the political parties, to take advantages of the immaturity and flexibility of younger students. Finally, universities can progress in an open and democratic environment as argued by Klemenčič (2011). The management of TU and KU is required to be more transparent to this point and try to establish democratic culture of equality and independence in the universities. It is essential to have an environment of cooperation and coordination between and among the stakeholders for the betterment of the university.

### **7.3 Implications for further study**

Student participation in university governance is a broad and dynamic concept, since the university governance includes various dimensions and student participation differs across the different institutions and the contexts. A single study can not account for all the aspects of university governance and student participation in it. The current study is an attempt from a particular angle to understand an aspect of the student participation in university governance in the context of two universities in Nepal, where the concept is new and rather challenging. In order to develop in-depth knowledge on this broad topic, it is essential to carry out more studies on its different aspects, from different viewpoints. The current study mainly addresses student participation at the institutional level of university governance. It suggests for the



follow up of such studies at other levels as well. Studies can be carried out at the faculty, department or program levels within the university, but also at national level.

The current study compares student participation at institutional level. The studies can be more interesting and detailed if they are carried out in-depth at the mentioned levels above. At the national level, comparison of student participation in HE governance between two countries would provide interesting insight. Furthermore, the current study mainly centres on student participation in decision-making and QAA processes. Further studies regarding the student participation in university governance, such as student government (Student unions, etc.) in university, power distribution or power sharing, conflict between and among the stakeholders, leadership vs. academic career of student participants, etc. also have potential to lead to interesting insights into the topic.

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# Appendixes

## Appendix 1: Interview protocol

Name of the interview:

Organization/ Institute:

Current position:

Telephone:

E-mail:

Past Involvement and Experience:

### *Interview protocol 1: For student representatives*

*How are students participated in the governance of Tribhuvan University and Kathmandu University?*

*Research question no. 1 what type of participation do the students have in the governance of TU and KU?*

*Interview questions:*

- What is your personal opinion about your (student) participation in university governance?
- How does your (TU / KU) university make decisions at the institutional?
- How the quality of TU / KU affiliated colleges or campuses is assured?
- What is the provision of student participation in the decision-making and the Quality Assurance (QA) processes of your (TU/ KU) university?

*Research question no. 2 Which intensity levels (degrees) are students participated in the governance of TU and KU?*

*Interview Questions:*

- How do you or your representatives communicate (put) students' voice in the decision making bodies?
- What are the areas or issues you or your representative discusses in the decision-making process in your university?
- How far your (students') issues or agendas are addressed by the university authorities in the decision making process?
- What might be issues or the agendas the university authorities do not like to hear from the students or their representatives?
- Do you think there is good proportion of student participation in all through the decision-making processes?

***Research Question No. 3. What are outcomes of involving students in the governance of TU and KU?***

*Interview Questions:*

- What do you think how you (students), your representatives and the university are benefited by participating students in the decision-making?
- What types of threats do you think the student participation has posed while participating in the decision-making process?

***Research Question No. 4. What are the main differences between student participation in the governance of TU and KU?***

- What sorts of difference do you find there in student involvement in the governance of TU and KU? And why do you think so?
- Why do you think that student participation in university governance is very essential?
- How best can students participate in decision making?
- Is there any other information you would like to add?

Thank you.

## ***Interview protocol 2: For Non-student representatives***

***Research question 1. What type of participation do the students have in the governance of TU and KU?***

*Interview questions:*

- What do you think on how a university is governed?
- In both public and private universities, there is provision to participate students in university governance through their representative. What do you think about their involvement in university governance?
- How do students participate in the governance of TU/ KU?
- How do the student representatives communicate student voice in the decision-making and QA Process?

***Research question 2. Which intensity levels (degrees) are students participated in the governance of TU and KU?***

*Interview Questions:*

- How strongly are their voices considered in the decision making process of TU / KU?
- What might be issues or the agendas the university authorities do not like to hear from the students or their representatives?
- What do you think about the role the students play in the decision making in the university governance, I mean in the TU / KU?
- Do you think the university (TU/ KU) has done a justice in student participation?

***Research question 3. What are outcomes of involving students in the governance of TU and KU?***

*Interview Questions:*

- What do you think about the benefits to the university and the students by involving them in the decision-making process?
- What kind of challenges might students face while involving in decision-making process?

***Research question 4. What are the major differences between student participation in the governance of TU and KU?***

*Interview Questions:*

- What sorts of difference do you find there in student participation in the governance of TU and KU? And why do you think so?
- Why do you think that student participation in university governance is very essential?
- What can be done from your side to make student actively participate in university governance?
- Is there any other information you would like to add?

Thank you.

## Appendix 2: Organizational structure of Tribhuvan University

*Based on: Tribhuvan University Act, 2049 (Tribhuvan University, 1992)*

These collectively form the structure of the University

(a) *University Assembly: the Supreme body of the university*

(b) *Academic Council,*

(c) *Executive Council,*

(d) *Service Commission,*

*major decision-making bodies of the University*

(e) Institute,

(f) Faculty,

(g) Department,

(h) Constituent Campus (Constituent College),

(i) Affiliated Campus (Affiliated College),

(j) Research Center, and

(k) Other bodies.

## Appendix 3: Formation of TU Assembly

*Based on: Tribhuvan University Act, 2049 (Kathmandu University, 1992)*

*The University Assembly as the supreme body of the University shall be formed as follows:*

(a) Chancellor-

Chairperson

(b) Pro-chancellor-

Vice-chairperson (**interviewed**)

(c) Vice-chancellor-

Member

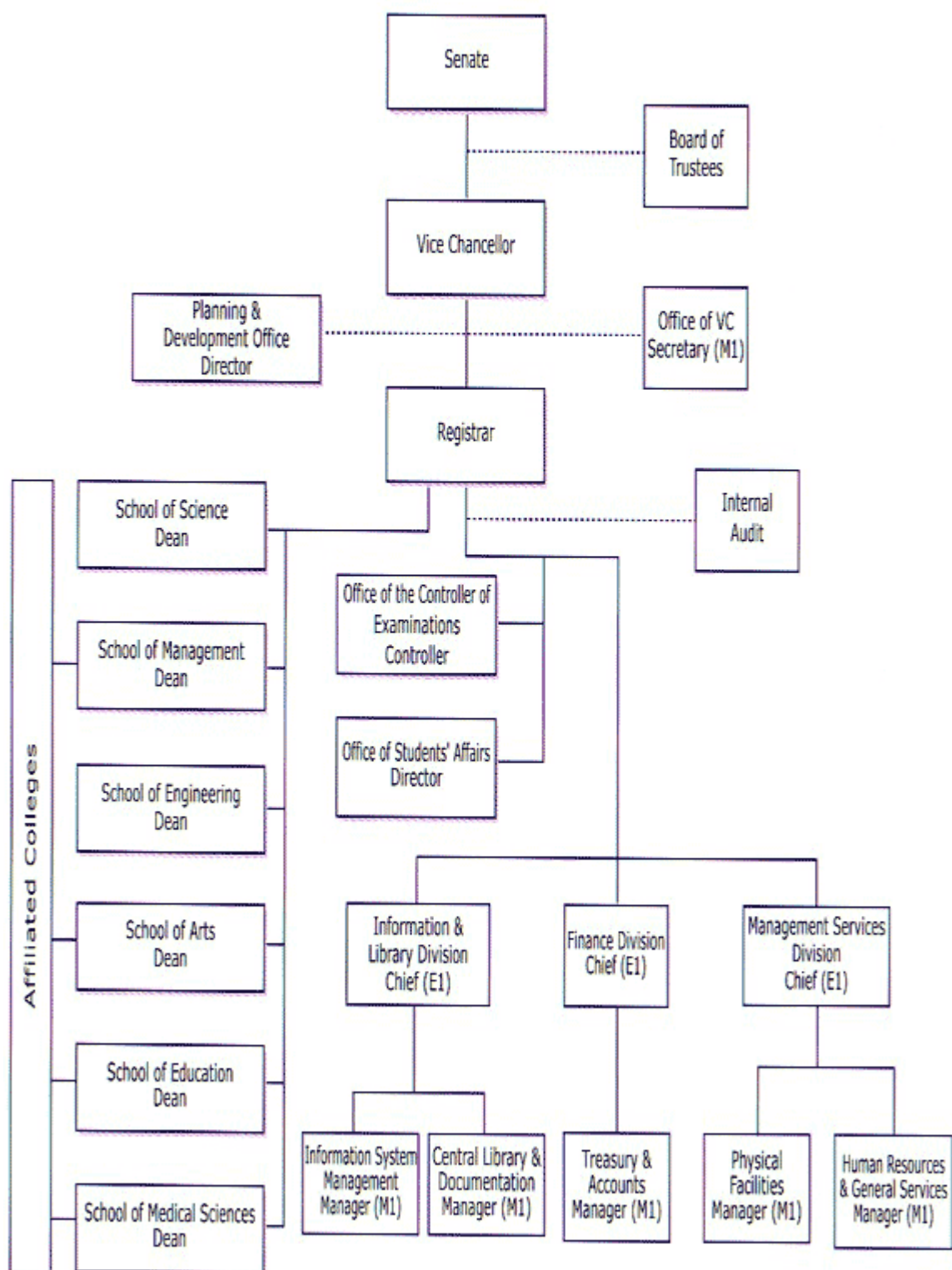
(d) Three persons from amongst Members of Parliament-

Member

- (e) Two persons from among the vice-chancellor of Nepal Academy, vice-chancellor of Nepal Academy of Science and Technology and vice-chancellors of other universities- Member
- (f) Rector - Member
- (g) Registrar- Member
- (h) Secretary at the Ministry of Education and Culture- Member
- (i) Secretary at the Ministry of Finance - Member
- (j) Member, National Planning Commission (Responsible for Education Sector) -Member
- (k) One from amongst former Vice-chancellors - Member
- (m) Deans of Institutes - Member
- (n) Faculty Deans - Member **(interviewed)**
- (o) Executive Directors of Research Centers - Member
- (p) Five persons from amongst Departmental Heads - Member
- (q) Five Teachers elected by an electorate college of presidents and secretaries of Nepal Teachers Union Campus Units of Tribhuvan University- Member
- (q1)Ä One Representative of the Tribhuvan University Professors Association - Member **(interviewed)**
- (q2) Ä One Representative of Nepal Public Campus Association - Member
- (r) Two persons from amongst the Campus (College) Chiefs of Constituent Campuses (Constituent Colleges) - Member
- (s) Two persons from amongst the Campus (College) Chiefs of Affiliated Campuses (Affiliated Colleges) - Member
- (t) One representative of Nepal Teachers' Union - Member
- (u) Two persons from amongst renowned intellectuals or dignitaries- Member
- (v) **Two persons from amongst the presidents of University free student unions -** Member **(interviewed)**
- (w) One from amongst journalists - Member
- (x) One representative of the Central Committee of University Teachers' Union -Member
- (y) Two persons from amongst the industrialists, business persons and donors - Member

**Appendix 4:** (Adapted: <http://www.ku.edu.np/university/index.php?go=org>)

## Kathmandu University Organization Structure





## Appendix 5: Formation of KU Senat

*Based on: Kathmandu University Act, 2048 (1991))*

Senate shall be the supreme and authorized body of the University.

*There shall be a Senate consisting following members: -*

- |   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| (a) Chancellor -  | Chairperson                 |
| (b) Pro-Chancellor -  | Member                      |
| (c) Vice-Chancellor -   | Member <b>(interviewed)</b> |
| (d) Registrar -   | Member                      |
| (e) Member, National Planning Commission (looking after Education sector) - | Member                      |
| (f) Secretary, Ministry of Education and Culture –                          | Member                      |
| (g) Secretary, Ministry of Finance –  | Member                      |
| (h) Deans –   | Member <b>(interviewed)</b> |
| (i) One person from amongst the Professors –                                | Member                      |
| (j) Mayor, Banepa Municipality -  | Member                      |
| (k) Mayor, Dulikhel Municipality -  | Member                      |
| (l) _.....  |                             |
| (m) Five persons from amongst the highly renowned persons –                 | Member <b>(interviewed)</b> |
| (n) One person from amongst the Industrialists -                            | Member                      |
| (o) One person from amongst the Teachers –                                  | Member <b>(interviewed)</b> |
| (p) <b>One person from amongst the Students –</b>                           | Member <b>(interviewed)</b> |
| (q) Chief librarian of the University –                                     | Member                      |

## Appendix 6: Flow chart for institutional accreditation process

Based on: (QAAD, 2013)

